

Across Borders, Across Generations:
Immigration, Assimilation, and Racial Identity Formation
in Multi-Generational Mexican American Families

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation investigates how racial identities of Mexican Americans both change and persist inter-generationally within families. Using purposive and snowball sampling, I interviewed three-generation middle class Mexican American families in California. I conducted in-depth interviews with sixty-seven members from twenty-nine three-generation families (Mexican immigrant grandparents and their children and grandchildren born in the U.S.). Two questions inspire this inquiry. First, what are the families' trajectories of racial identification and incorporation across the three generations? Second, what familial and social forces influence each generation's racial identity formation?

My research elaborates on and refines existing theories of assimilation and racial identity formation by using a generational, family-centered approach. I evoke and utilize the categories of "thinned attachment" and "cultural maintenance" to capture

trajectories of assimilation across generations. My study suggests that eight factors are significant in shaping racial identity development and incorporation patterns: spouse/partner, personal traits (phenotype and name), cultural toolkit, gender, social position, social context, institutions, and immigration/citizenship status. Inter-generational family memory (knowledge and stories transmitted through generations), parental ideologies, and historical context are also significant in shaping both racial identity and incorporation trajectories.

My research finds that assimilation, as a mode of structural incorporation, is predominant among the families interviewed. Structural assimilation influences racial identity formation in two bifurcated ways: it prompts a loss of Mexican affiliation or sparks a desire to retain a Mexican-oriented identity. Public and institutional discrimination have a tremendous impact on Mexican Americans' racial identity. Historical period is also influential: the Civil Rights' Movement offered a new racial rhetoric with which to combat racism and promote visibility. Finally, third generation Mexican Americans range from displaying flexibility in their identification options to being highly racialized in a way that makes Mexican American identity not a matter of choice. This research extends racial identity and assimilation theories by highlighting the mechanisms that drive these processes. Neither racial identity nor assimilation are straightforward progressions but, instead, develop unevenly and are influenced by family, society, and historical social movements.

DEDICATION

Much gratitude and love goes to my family who has believed in me, supported me, and encouraged me in my educational and career endeavors: Dorothy Mullison-Smith, David Vasquez, Jason Vasquez, Earl Smith, and Isabella Vasquez. I dedicate this work to my family, including my grandparents: Wendell and Ethel Mullison who appreciated my bookishness and gave me the gift of daylilies and Manuel and Lucy Vasquez whose own tale in part inspired this intellectual quest.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“In fact, people do not acculturate into an entire culture, which only exists in textbooks. This is especially true in America, which is too diverse to be a single culture even for textbook purposes.”
(Gans 1992b: 188)

Interviewee Paul Zagada enthusiastically explained his “Coca-Cola, 7-Up, and Evian water” image of how the racial identities of Mexican immigrants and their descendents change with each generation. To him, the Mexican immigrant generation is the “Coca-Cola” generation because they are rich in tradition and hold onto it in their new context. Their children are the “7-Up” generation because they lose some of the “color” of the culture and are more acculturated to the United States than their parents. The third generation is the “Evian water” because it has lost both its color and its carbonation, or cultural vibrancy, and has wholesale become a part of United States society. Eventually Simón, a thirty-something first generation immigrant from Mexico who works in Paul’s office, chimed in. What Simon said makes him different from the majority of immigrants from Mexico is that he is educated and bilingual. Paul recapitulated his “Coca-Cola, 7-Up, and Evian water” theory to Simón. Simón asked, “Well, what am I?” Paul was stumped, puzzling over the fact of Simón’s education, occupation, and class level. He said Simón didn’t fit “Coca-Cola” because while he is steeped in tradition he has an atypical experience of immigration to the United States and life experience following immigration. “Maybe he’s Diet Coke?” I offered. Paul affirmed, “Oh, I love it! Yeah! He’s still Coke but a bit different.”

While this exchange among Paul, Simón, and myself implies dilution as each generation in a family metaphorically becomes weaker in color and carbonation, this conceptualization is over-simplified. Indeed, as Simón's biography testifies, people immigrate to the U.S. with different levels of human capital and enter through various institutional social networks. Once on U.S. soil, furthermore, immigrants discover the truth behind Herbert Gans' caution about acculturation processes at the beginning of the chapter—that the U.S. “is too diverse to be a single culture even for textbook purposes.” The many subcultures that comprise the U.S. offer a variety of cultures and social networks that immigrants could possibly join.

As Mexican immigrants and their families struggle with what it means to be Mexican American, my research offers a case study into the processes of racial identity formation and assimilation—the process of adaptation to a host country. Racial identity formation is the interactional process whereby an individual negotiates the racial component(s) of his/her social identity. Through interactions with other individuals and institutions, people negotiate the social ascriptions (such as race) imposed upon them and, in response, develop an understanding of and ways to navigate these social categories. The patterns of racial and cultural incorporation discussed in this dissertation are far from a story of simple dilution with each passing generation. Instead, this work problematizes notions of uncomplicated and unavoidable eventual assimilation into the U.S. mainstream in a way that forsakes forbearers' racial and cultural identity.

Whether Mexican Americans, or Latinos generally, are a race or an ethnic group is a fraught question in the social sciences, politics, and within the group itself. Scholars debate the definitions of “race” and “ethnicity,” as well as their application to Latinos.

Prevailing usages of the terms “race” and “ethnicity” conflate them.¹ Making a common distinction, Robert Blauner (2001) maintains that race is associated with biology, whereas ethnicity is associated with culture. I use “race” because Latinos are often treated as a separate racial category and my interviewees referred to their experience as one of a subordinated racial group rather than one that is merely distinguished by ethnicity or culture. Race is understood to be (and is experienced as) biological and unchangeable, rather than something you can “choose.” Race, however unreal geneticists say it is, is imposed from outside by the ways people treat one another. On the other hand, ethnicity has a cultural nature and is often embraced or “chosen.” So, while the common-sense understanding of race is that it is inherited, innate, and unchangeable, ethnicity is understood to be cultural, a matter of shared traditions, customs, language, food, etc. Thus, one issue I explore is *the degree to which* Mexican Americans experience themselves as a race versus an ethnic group, whether this experience changes generationally, and what accounts for any persistence or change.

As scholars, politicians, and the public deliberate the “who are we?” question of national identity, it is imperative to understand the impact of Mexican immigration on these debates. Who do Mexican immigrants and their successive family generations become after settling in the U.S.? Do they assimilate? If so, what routes of racial and

¹ The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) determines federal standards for the reporting of “racial” and “ethnic” statistics. The OMB Directive 15 of 1977 described four races (i.e., American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, and White) and two ethnic backgrounds (of Hispanic origin and not of Hispanic origin). Under this definition, Hispanics are an ethnic group of any race (American Anthropological Association 1997). Other scholars, such as Jennifer Lee and Frank Bean (2004), use “race/ethnicity” because both categories are dynamic and not fixed concepts. Lee and Bean (2004) offer a convincing rationale for treating Latinos as separate (racial) category. First, Latinos see themselves as separate racial category (In 1990 and 2000 Censuses more than 97% of those who checked “some other race” were Latinos; 40% of Latino respondents checked the “some other race” category.). Second, they have been legally treated as a separate group, such as qualifying for federal programs for disadvantaged minorities like affirmative action Lee, Jennifer and Frank D. Bean. 2004. “America's Changing Color Lines: Immigration, Race/Ethnicity, and Multiracial Identification.” *Annual Review of Sociology*:221-242. (224).

cultural incorporation do they take as they assimilate into U.S. society? How do families transmit concepts of culture and racial identity across generations? Samuel Huntington's (2004) polemical work argues that "contiguity [of sending and receiving countries], numbers, illegality, regional concentration, persistence [of immigration waves], and historical presence" combine to make Mexican immigration distinct from previous immigration from Europe, Asia, and Latin America (Huntington 2004b: 230). Rather than simply presuming the impacts of Mexican immigration and immigrants on America, my project offers a detailed perspective on peoples' subjective experiences of immigration and settlement. The degree to which Mexican Americans experience their ancestry as an ethnicity—diluted in each generation and ultimately an "ethnic option" (Waters 1990)—versus experience circumstances that reinforce a sense of separation and make Mexican ancestry feel like a racial identity is precisely what this dissertation investigates empirically.

This dissertation investigates the racial identity formation of three-generation Mexican American families in California. Interviewing the immigrant generation and the two successive generations sheds light not only on the racial identity formation patterns of each successive generation but also reveals the processes by which (and extent to which) these families have become racially and culturally incorporated into U.S. society. To gain analytic insight into these concerns, my dissertation focuses on three-generation Mexican American families, investigating the primary question: how do first, second, and third generation Mexican Americans come to their sense of racial identity? Secondary questions follow: How does a sense of race get transmitted or transformed through three

generations in a family? Outside of the family, what other social arenas affect one's sense of racial self?

My research finds that Mexican immigrants, their children, and their grandchildren become increasingly embedded in U.S. institutions and ways of life with each successive generation. However, there is substantial variability in the ways members of each generation experience and express their racial identity and cultural legacy despite acculturation. "Thinned attachment" describes families whose commitment to and familiarity with their Mexican heritage wanes over time. By contrast, "cultural maintenance" describes those families that continue Mexican cultural practices, Catholicism, and the Spanish language through all three generations. Family ideologies, teachings, and memories (often in the form of family stories) are vehicles that transmit content of identity inter-generationally. Each generation's racial identity style—or palette of racial identity options—is informed by both "appropriated memories" (inherited from others) and "personally acquired memories" (developed from direct experience) (Mannheim 1936). Forces beyond the family including public spaces, educational systems, peer networks, religious institutions, and occupations also powerfully shape racial identity styles.

Latinos experience upward mobility and assimilation in ways that are both similar to and different from blacks. Audit studies show that blacks and Latinos both experience labor market discrimination (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Cross, Kenney, Mell, and Zimmermann 1990; Turner, Fix, and Struyk 1991) as well as discrimination in housing (Oakland 2004; Yinger 1995). Given these shared barriers to structural assimilation, blacks and Latinos differ in important ways. Latinos are much more likely than blacks to

intermarry with whites, a key sign of assimilation (Bean and Stevens 2003; Kalmijn 1998). Among Chicanos, out-marriage rates increase with generation in the U.S. (Murguia 1982). Latinos are also more likely than blacks to experience residential integration upon achieving upward mobility (Emerson, Yancey, and Chai 2001). The U.S. Census has considered Latinos a race in some years and an ethnic group in others (Rodriguez 2000); Latinos have also vacillated in their racial and ethnic self-definitions (Haney-Lopez 2003; Oboler 1995). Blacks, on the other hand, have had no such variation in their racial category. Most U.S. blacks are not immigrants, of course, and in fact, some black immigrants and their children hold onto their ethno-national identity in order to avoid the negative stereotypes associated with American blacks (Waters 1999). Thus, while there are similarities between blacks' and Latinos' integration patterns, there are also notable differences. Chief differences between upwardly mobile blacks and Latinos are their significantly different rates of intermarriage with whites, residential integration, and identificational assimilation. These dissimilarities suggest that the assimilation trajectories of blacks and Latinos are substantially distinct. Additionally, some argue that the emerging racial order is "black" vs. "non-black," with everyone who is "not black" grouped together (Warren and Twine 1997). Since Latinos are an intermediate zone between blackness and whiteness, the question of whether Latino-ness is or is not "racialized" is especially interesting.

I interviewed members of middle class families in part to determine whether and in what ways these economically successful and structurally integrated Mexican Americans are racialized. A key question is whether Mexican Americans are likely to assimilate and view their heritage "symbolically" (Gans 1979), like previous waves of

European immigrants, or whether racialization will forestall that option. Portes and Rumbaut (2001), focusing on the first and second generations, argue that due to low human capital, nativist hostility, racial discrimination, and a reactive counterculture, Mexican Americans will likely experience downward assimilation. Yet, time plays a key role in the assimilation process and my research extends to the third generation. While a segment of the Mexican American population is part of an urban underclass (Dohan 2003; Vigil 1988), another segment has experienced upward mobility (Alba 2006; Perlmann 2005; Reed, Hill, Jepsen, and Johnson 2005; Smith 2003). Mexican American upward mobility adds optimism to this group's assimilability—ostensibly, at least. Thus, determining whether and in what ways middle class Mexican Americans are racialized reveals much about Mexican Americans' ability to assimilate versus stand apart as a racial "other." A focus on middle class Mexican Americans is interesting because it is precisely this class-privileged group one would expect to be able to assimilate. Yet, even this relatively class-privileged group has embittering, racializing experiences that highlight their status as outside of the white mainstream. This dissertation is, thus, partially a story about "racialization despite assimilation."

Racial identity formation and assimilation occur concomitantly and through everyday practices and experiences. This research project initially centered on racial identity formation processes of three-generation Mexican American families, but it evolved into a project that took seriously the racial and cultural incorporation patterns of these families into the U.S. This project deals with the experiential process of assimilation and racial identity, distilling key moments and everyday decisions people make that significantly influence the process, speed, and direction of assimilation. As a

general trend, as each generation takes on more “American” self-descriptions, they also take on more “American” modes of life and cultural behaviors. Yet, considering the variety of racial options lived out by third generation Mexican Americans, this is not an oversimplified story of gradual, straightforward assimilation. Being Mexican American is not yet an “ethnic option” (Waters 1990), as it is for white ethnics. Indeed, all three generations experience a high degree of racialization in numerous social arenas. Thus, the story that unfolds here is not simple and straightforward but instead follows a “bumpy-line” (Gans 1992a) and branches in a number of directions, all pointing toward the future.

Theoretical Background: State of Knowledge

◇ *Assimilation*

My research refines and deepens assimilation theory by pinpointing moments and decisions that lead to particular kinds of racial and cultural incorporation trajectories. I highlight the role family generational memory plays in this process. In the following section I describe assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory, suggesting how this research elaborates this set of theories. My work shows assimilation to be an incremental process, gradually occurring due to both quotidian and key decisions.

Assimilation theorists assert that assimilation—the process of adaptation to a host country—is the inevitable destiny for immigrant groups (Gordon 1964; Park, Burgess, McKenzie, and Wirth 1925).² Milton Gordon (1964) proffered three theories of assimilation: Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. Anglo-

² Gordon (1964) predicted seven subprocesses of assimilation: cultural/behavioral (acculturation), structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional (absence of prejudice), behavior receptional (absence of discrimination), and civic (p. 71).

conformity has historically been the most prevalent assimilation theory, assuming the “desirability of maintaining English institutions (as modified by the American Revolution), the English language, and English-oriented cultural patterns as dominant and standard in American life” (Gordon: 88). This perspective is predicated upon an assumption of European superiority. The melting pot describes European immigrant incorporation into the U.S. as producing a mixture, “a totally new blend, culturally and biologically, in which the stocks and folkways of Europe were...indiscriminately mixed in the political pot of the emerging nation and melted together by the fires of American influence and interaction into a distinctly different new type” (Gordon: 115). Finally, cultural pluralism “posits the right of ethnic groups in a democratic society to maintain their communal identity and their own subcultural values” (Gordon: 262). Gordon offered little room for variation among these options, nor does he complicate his analysis with concerns such as gender, class, culture, historical timing, or structure of opportunity in the host country. The final, inevitable destination of Gordon’s theory is assimilation, earning his theory the nickname “straight-line assimilation.”

Straight-line assimilation theory was developed in response to the “great migration” of the late 1800s and early 1900s. These immigrants, primarily from Southern and Eastern European countries, over time assimilated into mainstream American culture because they could eventually make claims to whiteness. While portrayed by many as generalizable, straight-line assimilation theory is limited by the characteristics of the mostly European³ immigrant population and the historical moment (education was not crucial and jobs that pay a living wage were more accessible).

³ This is not to take for granted that Europe was not perceived as a unitary origin during the “Great Migration.” Indeed, European immigrants (especially of Southern and Eastern European origin) underwent

Segmented assimilation, as a revision of straight-line assimilation theory, accounts for a variety of assimilation outcomes and addresses what “segment” of society a group is incorporated into (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut and Portes 2001). This theory posits that different levels of human capital facilitate different acculturation outcomes: dissonant⁴, consonant⁵, and selective⁶ (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993). This theory accounts for the possibility of downward assimilation (or assimilation into a marginalized or stigmatized subgroup), noting that assimilation into the middle-class mainstream is hardly a certainty (Gans 1992b). Segmented assimilation was developed in response to the post-1965 Immigration Act that loosened immigration restrictions, allowing for an influx of in-migration from Asian and Latin American countries (the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was terminated as a result of this Immigration Act).

My perspective on Mexican immigration is anchored in a view of assimilation as an incremental process that re-shapes racial self-understandings. Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003) argue that assimilation is incremental and intergenerational, a product of everyday decisions. They reject the assimilation canon as one-sided, a form of “Eurocentric hegemony” because it uses White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants as the reference

a period of questioned assimilability, during which time some white ethnic groups distanced themselves from blacks and Native Americans in order to claim whiteness and attendant status privileges Ignatiev, Noel. 1995. *How the Irish Became White*. New York: Routledge, Roediger, David R. 1999. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London ; New York: Verso..

⁴ In “dissonant acculturation” children’s learning of English and introjection of American cultural outlooks exceeds their parents’ and leaves them behind. An example would be working class immigrants who lack the support of co-ethnic communities; poverty reduces their authority and external sources do not validate their way of life.

⁵ In “consonant acculturation” parents and children learn the language and culture of the host country at approximately the same pace and adjust their behavior accordingly. An example would be educated parents who are bilingual (fluent in English).

⁶ “Selective acculturation” is marked by fluent bilingualism in the second generation, preserved channels of communication across generations and/or supportive networks in the immigrant community. The second generation retains key values and expectations from their original culture and respect for them.

point, which allows no room for the positive roles of racial and ethnic minorities. They theorize that immigration will result in the “cultural reshaping of the mainstream” (Alba and Nee 2003: 282) and that the mainstream will eventually include previously excluded populations (although power holders will still likely remain whites). Similarly, others have suggested that the idea of who comprises the mainstream and boundary lines between groups are shifting due to demographic changes spurred by immigration (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004). Nazli Kibria’s (2002) work on second generation Chinese and Korean Americans similarly underscores that assimilation (or, integration into dominant society) is a *process*, one that influences the self-concept of those undergoing it (Kibria 2002: 197). As assimilation occurs and the U.S. mainstream changes, it is imperative to discover how immigrants and subsequent generations of their families understand and enact their racial and cultural positions in the U.S.

I agree with Lee and Bean (2004) and Zhou and Bankston (1998) that acculturation is no longer the surest path to successful economic incorporation, as the straight-line model suggests. Instead, “casting off one’s immigration identity can lead to downward mobility—a concept that directly challenges the dominant sociological paradigm of straight-line assimilation” (Lee and Bean 2004: 227; Zhou and Bankston 1998). In this light, “selective acculturation” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993) and “accommodation without assimilation” (Gibson 1988)—both of which I found in my research—may offer a way to hold on to supportive strands of native culture while simultaneously accommodating to the new culture.

My research challenges and refines assimilation theory in several important ways, primarily by focusing on the institutional and interactional experiences of immigrant

families and their offspring. I examine the life course trajectory of Mexican immigrants and scrutinize who their children and grandchildren become as U.S. citizens. I examine the daily decisions and key moments wherein acculturation and integration take place. By analyzing experiences (rather than “life outcome measures”) across three generations, I am able to distill patterns as to how both assimilation and racialization occur. It is through everyday decisions, encounters, and experiences that individuals and families move toward, resist, and reshape patterns of assimilation.

◇ *Family, Race, and Identity*

I use the family, race, and identity literatures as tools to understand assimilation and racial formation. The family is a cornerstone of identity development. The family is a key source of factual family-history information and is a wellspring of informal education on “what it means to be” or “how to be” of a particular heritage. Karl Mannheim (1946) theorizes the inter-generational transfer of knowledge. He notes the force of appropriated memories—such as lessons handed from parents to children that constitute background knowledge—while also underscoring the importance of personal experience as the “only sort of knowledge which really ‘sticks’ and it alone has real binding power” (296). Mannheim balances the formative influences of both “appropriated memories” (those taken over from someone else) and “personally acquired memories” (those created directly from knowledge gained through one’s own experiences). Acknowledging the power of childhood and family life, Mannheim defines childhood as “primary stratum of experience,” upon or against which worldviews are drafted. “Early impressions tend to coalesce into a *natural view* of the world. All later experiences then tend to receive their meaning from this original set, whether they appear

as this set's verification and fulfillment or as its negation and antithesis" (Mannheim 1952: 298). Thus, human consciousness is formed by an "inner dialectic" and worldview formation is always constructed with reference to the primary stratum (298).

Multi-generational families are an under-theorized unit of analysis. My research fills this gap by examining the racialization processes that operate within families. By recognizing the dynamism of race and unveiling how families and other institutions shape the racial formation process, I contribute to the analysis of how racial self-understandings shift, settle, solidify, and change. The family is its own organic unit that offers an opportunity to trace racial lineages, experiences, ideologies, and practices.

The focus on race across generations is compelling because the political meaning and definition of race is historically contingent. As discussed, Mexican Americans have alternately been considered a race and an ethnic group. Not only have boundaries around racial categories changed over time, but also the meanings attached to racial groups are dependent on historical context, generation, and family influence. Indeed, scholars utilizing a "racial-generational approach" (Takahashi 1997) have discovered that political styles, perspectives on, and involvement in ethnicity change generationally, and often in reaction to wider political climate (Cohen and Eisen 2000; Takahashi 1997).

Karl Mannheim (1946) defines generations as sharing a "particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age groups' embedded in a historical-social process" (292). Generations are subject to common dominant social, intellectual, and political circumstances. The insight that race is a negotiation between generations (or cohorts), shaped by historical eras, motivates this project. I put assimilation theory—as espoused by Gordon (1964) and updated by Portes and Zhou (1993) and Portes and

Rumbaut (2001)—in dialogue with Mannheim’s generational analysis of history and knowledge transmission. Furthermore, by centering on multi-generational families, I am able to investigate intergenerational communication within a family. I probe the experiential and family memory aspects of race to discover how people discuss and negotiate the content, meanings, boundaries, and constraints of Mexican American identity. Using this conceptual apparatus, we can deepen our understanding about how historical context and family generations bear on racial identity formation and assimilation processes.

The social-psychological work on identity development is extensive⁷ (Breuer and Freud 1966; Briggs 1991; Cooley 1998; Erikson 1968; Erikson 1980; Erikson 1985; Freud, Strachey and Gay 1989; Mead and Morris 1934; Schachtel 1959a; Schachtel 1959b), but to date little of this scholarship rigorously interrogates the intra-familial processes by which people claim racial or ethnic group membership. Existing literature also lacks knowledge about how racial identity changes over time due to interactions within generations in a family. Focusing on the “societal process,” Charles Cooley offers a rationale for locating the processes of racial identity formation within the family. Families, as well as other primary groups such as neighborhoods, play groups, or community organizations are the “nursery of human nature”; they are fundamental in the formation of the social nature and ideals of an individual (Cooley 1998: 180). This

⁷ Sigmund Freud developed a theory of psychic maturation that is rooted in infantile sexuality. Freud’s successors, such as Erik Erikson, unpacked and extended this work. Erikson built a theory of human development that extended throughout the life course, and in contrast to Freud, gave credit to three forces which bear on human development: “the somatic process, the ego process, and the societal process,” which grew into the different scientific disciplines of biology, psychology, and the social sciences, respectively (Erikson 1985: 36). Erikson’s work is useful in underscoring that the somatic, ego, and societal processes constitute human life and do not have a hierarchy, but rather codetermine human life.

social-psychological literature leaves open the question of the processes by which racial identity develops and changes through the life course and family generations.

Both inside and outside the family unit, race is a critical component of social identity. Rather than consider race an immutable and ascribed category, I consider it flexible, contested, negotiated, and situational. I lean on post-structural theories of identity for their insights into the contextual nature of social identity, yet I do not believe we should jettison the term “identity” because it is ambiguous or contradictory.⁸ My interviews reveal that people still think with reference to both categorical and relational group memberships when trying to draw the boundaries of their identity. Thus, rather than jettison the term “identity” we should revise it or use it with more precision. While adhering to the premise that identities are partial and positional (Hall, Morley, and Chen 1996), I employ a symbolic-interactionist approach that holds that culture occurs and identity (“presentation of self”) is manufactured on a practice-based, micro-interactionist level (Goffman 1959).

Building from the premise that race is a social construction, I borrow the insight of Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker (1995) that “difference is an ongoing

⁸ The post-modernist literature on identity embraces two strands. One perspective, represented by Judith Butler, follows Fanon in grounding her theory of subjection and resistance in the work of Louis Althusser (Butler 1995; Butler 1999; Butler 1993). For Althusser, discourse is performative (that is, a speech act produces that which it names), and accordingly, a subject is constituted by being “hailed, addressed, named” by another. Butler shows how the processes of hailing and interpellation applies to social categories, not just proper names. Following Michel Foucault, who theorizes discourse as a regulatory mechanism (Foucault 1975; Foucault 1990; Foucault and Gordon 1980), Butler reveals that performativity works in conjunction with materialization (the forcible reiteration of norms) to create and regulate social selves.

The second strand of post-modernist work on identity is consumed with internal debates over the use and meaning of the term identity. Stuart Hall staunchly argues against essentialism and in favor of seeing identities as “strategic and positional” (Hall 1996: 3), always in flux and fractured. Others have discussed that the proliferation of the meaning of “identity” has made the word lose its analytic purchase (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). I find the post-modernist attempt to render identity meaningless problematic, for while I agree that identity is often partial and situated, it also is very significant to people in their everyday lives.

interaction accomplishment” (West and Fenstermaker 1995: 8).⁹ From this perspective, race is not a pre-existing social identifier that has a constant and unchangeable meaning. Instead of viewing race and its effects as “objective, factual and transsituational,” this standpoint, rooted in ethnomethodology, posits that properties of social life such as race, class, and gender “are actually managed accomplishments or achievements of local processes” (Zimmerman 1978: 11). This perspective disrupts the notion that modes of difference (such as race) are natural and immutable. Overturning the idea that ascriptions such as race and gender have an essential nature requires that we view these social elements as constructed and maintained through social interactions. West and Fenstermaker write: “Conceiving of race and gender as ongoing accomplishments means we must locate their emergence in social situations, rather than within the individual or some vaguely defined set of role expectations” (West and Fenstermaker 1995: 25). If race is an everyday interactional accomplishment, the question becomes: what aspects of social life bear on the creation of a(n inherently dynamic) racial self? My respondents reported that family life, schools, peer networks, religion, workplaces, and public discrimination were all significant in shaping their racial selves.

The family, identity, and race literatures leave unanswered the question of how the life experiences and ideologies of the parent generation affect the beliefs and practices of the next generation. My project is motivated by the realization that life experience does not end with the single individual who lives it. Rather, life experiences can profoundly influence other family members through shared values and principles, and through shared memories and stories. Since neither identity nor culture is static and

⁹ For a discussion for how this insight applies to gender, see West, Candace and Don Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1:125-151.

unitary, individuals have some creative agency as they sift through storehouses of familial knowledge and try to make both inherited and first-hand knowledge about racial identity meaningful.

Why Study Mexican Americans?

Scholars have long focused on the black-white binary in the United States (Blauner 1989; Blauner 2001; Carmichael and Hamilton 1992; Collins 1991; Conley 1999; Fanon 1967; Feagin 1991; Fredrickson 1981; Gilroy 1987; Gilroy 1993; Ignatiev 1995; Massey and Denton 1993; Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997; Wilson 1987). Only in the last couple of decades has scholarship moved beyond this by focusing on the burgeoning Latino population, widening the black-white dichotomy into the multi-tiered image of a “racial hierarchy”¹⁰ (Acevedo 2001; Almaguer 1994; Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000; Davis 2000; Foley 1990; Foley 1997; Gutiérrez 1995; Haney-Lopez 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Montejano 1987; Sanchez 1993; Skerry 1993). Recently there has been a surge of literature on Latinos, an increasingly visible population. Some scholarship investigates the contributions of this segment and other work is born out of fear of the “browning” or “Latinoization” of the United States. The question of Latinos—as occupying racial terrain somewhere between blacks and whites—is a complicated yet important one.

There is a dearth of work in the sociology of race literature on the subtleties and contradictions of how Mexican American identity (or Latino identity)¹¹ flows through

¹⁰ This term comes from a speech Patricia Hill Collins gave at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA in August 2005.

¹¹ Mexican Americans are a social group that falls within the larger term of “Latino.” “Latino” refers to a broader social category that includes other people of Central and Latin American origin.

family generations. The bulk of the scholarship on Latino families to date concentrates on immigration, settlement patterns, revised gender dynamics (Griswold del Castillo 1984; Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001), and the role family and cultural background play in youth's academic achievement (Kao 1995; Kao 1998) or disengagement (Ogbu 1990; Ogbu 1994; Valenzuela 1999). Recent portrayals of the rising second generation (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut and Portes 2001) carefully detail experiences of acculturation, language acquisition, academic performance, ambition, and discrimination, yet focus solely on the first and second generations. Questions of identification swirl around selecting pre-prescribed options on the U.S. Census (Rodriguez 2000) or battling against the limiting nature of ethnic labels and calling for political action through self-definition (Oboler 1995). While some literature traces the history of Mexican American experiences in the United States utilizing age cohorts within ethnic groups as units of analysis (Montejano 1987; Sanchez 1993), none ground their generational analysis within family units for a nuanced portrait of the transmission of racial identity and culture.

Mexican Americans have a rich and complicated history in the United States, starting from the fact that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 to end the U.S.-Mexican War meant that the U.S. not only annexed 1/3 of the territory of Mexico (all or part of present day California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico), but annexed Mexican citizens as well. The U.S. avoided according citizenship rights to Mexican inhabitants of the newly annexed territories, nullified their Mexican land grants, marginalized and discriminated against them, circulated ideologies of inferiority, and overall, effectively introduced the notion of

Mexicans as second-class citizens. After the war, land ownership moved from the hands of Mexicans to those of Anglos, followed quickly by a division of labor that was delineated by race, a dual-wage system in which Mexican Americans were paid less than Anglos for the same work, residential segregation, occupational displacement, school segregation, and political disenfranchisement (Gutiérrez 1995; Montejano 1987; Sanchez 1993). The U.S. relationship with Mexican immigrants has been marked by racial dominance, as described by the theory of “internal colonialism.” Robert Blauner (2001) argues, “The colonial order in the modern world has been based on the dominance of white Westerners over non-Western people of color; racial oppression and the racial conflict to which it gives rise are endemic to it” (Blauner 2001: 22). The dominant group secures its superior position through the exclusion and exploitation of other groups. Even if ostensibly offered greater economic opportunities in the U.S., Mexican nationals have historically been pawns of the U.S. government. The U.S. federal government heavily recruited Mexican laborers during times of U.S. economic boom and forcibly expelled them during the Depression of the early 1930s. In the 1930s and 1940s, at precisely the time when Mexican American youth were attaining an ethnic consciousness, combating xenophobia, and arguing for dignity in the U.S., the U.S. embarked on another round of drafting cheap Mexican labor through the 1942 Bracero Program, only to expel suspected illegal aliens through Operation Wetback of 1954 (Gutiérrez 1995).

Since 1848, Mexican Americans have been negotiating their relationship with other Americans in U.S. society. Even before California’s statehood in 1850, fierce debates were waged over where to draw the racial lines, a boundary that would determine who would and would not be extended the franchise and citizenship rights. Mexicans

were deemed “white” and extended citizenship (although the legal enforcement of this decision was shoddy), while California Indians were deemed “nonwhite” and ineligible for citizenship (Almaguer 1994: 9). The legal system—or more specifically, the white power holders who have historically determined law—has itself constructed the definition of “whiteness,” a term whose definition has changed through time in tandem with nativist political agendas. Furthermore, the judicial system has both bestowed and revoked “whiteness” and its attendant legal privileges upon various populations at different times (Haney-López 1996). Mexicans are one of many groups that have been jostled with regard to the question of whiteness and legal status.

Each generation of Mexican Americans has had to develop a self-conception vis-à-vis white mainstream America. The labels Mexican Americans have applied to themselves have changed through time and generation (Buriel 1987), including, non-exhaustively: “Mexican American,” “Chicano,” “Xicano,” “La Raza,” “Hispanic,” “Hispano,” “Latino,” “Mexicano,” “Chicano-Mexicano,” and “Tejano” (Oboler 1995).

The U.S. Census’ changing policies about racial and ethnic categorization over time speaks to the socially constructed quality and overall tenuousness of racial categories.¹² Racial classification of Hispanics¹³ has historically varied greatly. Following is a brief historical timeline of the varying U.S. Census definitions of “Hispanic,” taken from Clara Rodriguez’s book *Changing Race* (p. 102):

¹² Clara Rodriguez justifies the use of the Census as an analytic tool to conceptualize popular notions of race: “Census categories provide insight into how a society’s ideologies and dominant ideas and beliefs are reflected in official government classifications. To a degree, they also represent public consensus on how populations are viewed and counted.” Rodriguez, Clara E. 2000. *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States*. New York: New York University Press. (xiii-xiv)

¹³ I use Latino and Hispanic as synonyms.

- 1930 - Mexican was categorized as a separate “race” (Mexican as a racial category was never used again before or after 1930)
- 1940 -A linguistic definition was used (“persons of Spanish mother tongue”)
- 1950 and 1960 - Hispanic surnames were privileged (“persons of Spanish surname”)
- 1970 - In response to Hispanic pressure for a Hispanic self-identifier, a subgroup was asked about their “origin” and then given several Hispanic origin options on the questionnaire.
- 1940-1970 - Hispanics were “white” unless appeared to be Indian or Negro (the census enumerators who were mostly white at the time made this determination).
- 1980, 1990, 2000 - Hispanics can be “of any race” they choose.

Even the U.S. Census, a government-sponsored classification tool, has been confused about how to classify Hispanics. Over four decades, from 1940 to 1970, Hispanics were counted according to three different criteria: linguistic in 1940, surname in 1950 and 1960, and origin in 1970. Furthermore, there is clear indecision as to whether Hispanics constitute a separate race (as in 1930), are part of the “white” race (as in 1940 to 1970), or whether they are best considered an ethnic group within an overarching racial category of their choice (1980 to 2000). As of the 2000 Census, four primary racial groups are designated: white, black (African American, Negro), American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian,¹⁴ as well as “some other race.” “Spanish/Hispanic/Latino”¹⁵ is the only ethnicity that can be selected in addition to a racial category, making it possible for a Hispanic person to be of any race. This historic indecision, however, reflects popular culture as laypeople and scholars alike are at odds over whether Hispanics are a race or an ethnic group.

¹⁴ Asian sub-options include: Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Other Asian (fill in box), Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander (fill in box).

¹⁵ Spanish/Hispanic/Latino sub-options include: Mexican/Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.

Today, Mexico is the leading country of origin for both legal and undocumented immigration into the United States. California's population¹⁶, according to Census 2000¹⁷, was 32.4% people of Hispanic origin, compared to the national average of 12.5%.

Table 1.1

HISPANIC (CENSUS 2000) AND TOTAL POPULATION (2005 ESTIMATES), BY STATE*

State	Percent Hispanic	Total Population (Million)	Hispanic Population (Million)
New Mexico	42.1%	1.9	.80
California	32.4%	35.3	12.5 [Mex.: 10.4]
Texas	32.0%	22.5	7.2
Arizona	25.3%	5.7	1.4
Nevada	19.7%	2.3	.5
New York	15.1%	19.2	2.9
Colorado	17.1%	4.6	.8
Florida	16.8%	17.4	2.9
New Jersey	13.3%	8.7	1.2
Illinois	12.3%	12.7	1.6

*Only states with 10% Hispanic population or greater are shown.

Data Source: www.factfinder.census.gov

California is the leading state of residence of legal permanent residents (LPR) in 2004, estimated at 3.3 million or 28.5% of the total LPR population in the U.S. (Rytina 2006).¹⁸

¹⁶ In 2000, "California celebrated the millennium as the second mainland state (after New Mexico) to become a 'majority-minority' society". Additionally, "in 7 of the 10 biggest cities—New York, Los Angeles, Houston, San Diego, Phoenix, Dallas, and San Antonio—Latinos now outnumber Blacks; and in LA, Houston, Dallas and San Antonio, non-Hispanic whites as well." Davis, Mike. 2000. *Magical urbanism : Latinos reinvent the US city*. London ; New York: Verso.

¹⁷ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html> accessed on 8/25/05.

“Mexico was the leading country of birth of the LPR population in 2004 because legal immigration from Mexico far exceeds that of any other sending country, and Mexicans have historically been among the least likely LPRs to naturalize” (Rytina 2006: 4). Contemporary undocumented immigration to California from all sending nations is estimated at 100,000-200,000 per year, with Mexico as the leading country of origin.¹⁹ Further, immigration to California has increased five-fold from 1.8 million in 1970 to 8.9 million in 2000 (PPIC 2002). Thus the question of whether and how Mexican immigrants will enter American society as a distinguishable racial group or as an assimilated “ethnic option” has become urgent politically and culturally, as well as sociologically (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut and Portes 2001; Skerry 1993).

As the demographics of the U.S., and in particular Southwestern states, change due to the continuing influx of Mexican immigrants, concerns over American culture and belonging begin to simmer. By understanding who these Mexican immigrants and their families (U.S.-born children and grandchildren, of course, being full-fledged U.S. citizens) are, we begin to better comprehend the complexities of not just immigration and assimilation but of American culture. Outside of the Native American population, the U.S. has historically been a nation of immigrants,²⁰ a fact the nation tends to collectively forget. As nativist sentiments rise during periods of noticeable immigration from Asia

¹⁸ New York follows second with nearly half (1.5 million) the legal permanent resident population hosted by California.

¹⁹ The Public Policy Institute of California (www.ppic.org) estimates net undocumented immigration (from all sending nations) to California at less than 100,000 per year from 1980-85, peaked at 200,000 per year in 1989-90, and declined sharply after 1990 with levels at less than 100,000 per year. Johnson, Hans P. 1996. "Undocumented Immigration to California: 1980-1993." Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco. (p. viii)

²⁰ See John Ogbu (1990) for a discussion that distinguishes “voluntary” from “involuntary” immigrants. Africans imported to the U.S. and diasporized during slavery are an example of “involuntary immigrants.”

Latin America, it is probably best to recall that most of the “white American mainstream” was once part of an ethnic immigrant group, many of whom were considered “non-white” at time of entry and not immediately embraced for reasons of racial or cultural foreignness. Questions of the “assimilability” of current waves of Mexican immigrants can be answered in part by looking at the recent past and deciphering the racial incorporation trajectories of Mexican immigrants who arrived between 1922 and 1962 (median year of arrival of my first generation respondents was 1950). Mexican immigrants who stayed in the U.S. and raised their families in the U.S. offer a window through which to view assimilation and racialization.

This project speaks to the demographic shifts that the United States has undergone due to a continuing influx of Mexicans and their U.S.-born descendants.²¹ The implications of minority populations or so-called “majority minority” states—that is, where the population of the state is predominately minority—are often examined in terms of life outcomes such as educational level, job attainment, language acquisition and income level. What is often overlooked is the larger question of identity: who do these immigrants become after decades in the United States? Who are their children and grandchildren? How do the second and third generations identify racially? Especially given rising intermarriage rates with each generation (Bean and Stevens 2003; Murguía 1982; Schoen, Nelson, and Collins 1977), the fact that Mexicans most commonly intermarry with Whites (Jimenez 2004), and the general tendency for upward mobility

²¹ Mexican migration followed national trends through the 1990s to 2005. Nation-wide immigration from international origins grew from just above 1 million migrants in 1992 to 1.2 million in 1997. The spike of total inflow was in 1999-2000 at 1.5 million. Since 2000, immigration has slowed to the mid-1990s (the rate 1.1 million in 2003). Mexican migration followed the “slow increase, spike, decrease” trend of national migration patterns. Mexican migration has held relatively steady at about one-third of the overall flow. From 1992-2004 the unauthorized share of Mexican immigrants increased, overtaking the authorized share by 2004. Passel, Jeffrey S. and Roberto Suro. 2005. “Rise, Peak, and Decline: Trends in U.S. Immigration 1992-2004.” Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C. Pgs. 6-7.

through the generations, third generation Mexican Americans may be able easily to meld into mainstream America. What factors shape Mexican Americans' racial identity choices? More broadly, how are Mexican immigrants and the families they build in the U.S. incorporating into the U.S. racial and cultural landscapes?

Scholarly attention thus far has been devoted to both first and second generation immigrants in the arena of life chances, outcomes, and assimilation/acculturation patterns. But, thus far there has been a failure to make within-family racial identity linkages between the first, second, and third generations in a way that highlights intergenerational communication. My research links the fields of race, culture and family and my findings speak to both racial identity formation processes and Latinos' assimilation into U.S. society. My generational approach to the study of Mexican American families refines assimilation theory by uncovering incorporation patterns and highlighting the key points at which this process is pushed forward.

Research Methodology and Fieldsites

◇ *Sample*

This research project assesses the complex process of racial identity formation in three generation Mexican American families. I located my research in California because it is the state with the largest Hispanic population. California has the second largest *percentage* of Hispanics (32.4%) of all fifty states but with its 35.9 million total population, California has by far the largest Hispanic population in the U.S (12.5 million) (data source: 2000 Census). I sought out three-generation Mexican American families, beginning with Mexican immigrants that are now grandparents. The first generation is

comprised of Mexican nationals who immigrated to the United States, the second generation consists of the U.S.-born children of the Mexican immigrants, and the third generation includes the U.S.-born grandchildren of the Mexican immigrants. The respondents in my sample were difficult to locate due to the race, generation, family-relation, geography, and age²² specificity of my criteria.

I conducted sixty-seven in-depth interviews in twenty-nine three-generation families roughly split between Northern and Southern California.²³ The bases for my Northern and Southern California fieldsites were the San Francisco Bay Area and Santa Barbara County, though the families I interviewed were dispersed around those locations within approximately a 100-mile radius.

I employed a modified theoretical sampling strategy, followed by snowball sampling. First, I contacted families that fit my racial and generational profile by working through Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, Catholic Churches, and high schools in various cities near my two selected fieldsites. Once I made contacts in the community, I proceeded with a snowball sampling strategy. The vast majority of the interviews were conducted in person and one-on-one. All respondents were either first generation (Mexican nationals who immigrated to the United States), second generation (the U.S.-born children of the Mexican immigrants), or third generation (the U.S.-born grandchildren of the Mexican immigrants).

²² I set the minimum age for participation at seventeen. While I did not establish an age maximum, potential respondents were less inclined to participate as their age increased (due to frail health).

²³ Please see Appendices A and B for the interview schedule and the biographical data sheet I used. Both items were also available in Spanish.

Table 1.2

**RESPONDENT SUMMARY TABLE
(29 FAMILIES)**

	N	Male; Female	Age Range	Median Age	Adolescence (age 10-20 yrs)
Total*	67	34; 33	-	-	
Gen 1	8	2; 6	65-88	83	1927-1960
Gen 2	30	15; 14	38-73	59	1942-1987
Gen 3	29	17; 13	17-45	28	1970-2005

*Auxiliary Interviews (not counted in Total N): Two spouses at second generation level.

The age range of the first generation is sixty-five to eighty-eight (median age is eighty-three); the age range of the second generation is thirty-eight to seventy-three (median age is fifty-nine); the age range of the third generation is seventeen to forty-five (median age is twenty-eight). While the age ranges are wide, this is not a significant limitation since my project focuses on generation in the U.S. rather than age or birth cohort.²⁴ Thirty-four interviewees were male, thirty-three were female, and the vast majority were middle class²⁵, with a few older generation individuals falling into a lower income bracket, as well as a couple of wealthy exceptions.²⁶ I over-sampled middle and upper-middle class families which affects the generalizability of my findings.

Of the twenty-nine families I interviewed, all fit the first, second, and third generation profile, although not all three generations in each family were available for interviews. Due to the difficulty of gaining access to first generation immigrant

²⁴ Since there is an outlier in each generation that widens the age range, median age for each category is another way to get an image of my dataset.

²⁵ I defined middle class through a number of different factors, including: 1) If individual income met or exceeded \$25,000, 2) If household income met or exceeded \$40,000, 3) If respondent possessed a college degree or above, or 4) If respondent held a managerial or professional occupation. If an individual possessed any of these qualities, I considered him/her middle class.

²⁶ See Appendix C for a list of interviewees and some demographic information.

grandparents (due to their ill health, protective younger family members, or their having died), I concentrated recruitment efforts on the second and third generation descendants. Seven families include first, second, and third generation members, whereas twenty—the bulk of the families—consisted of the second and third generations.²⁷ I interviewed at least one person in each available generation per family. In a couple of cases I interviewed two siblings in the third generation. I conducted two auxiliary interviews with two spouses of second generation respondents (they were both Mexican American but different generations) since they were home at the time of the interview and interested in the project.²⁸ These spouses contributed to the interview conversation with their own narratives as well as prompting the memory of the primary respondent on a few questions, thus deepening the quality of the interviews.

◇ *Logic for Employing Qualitative Methodology*

My method of in-depth interviewing aimed at eliciting *focused life history narratives* of my respondents. My interview schedule focuses on issues of family and racial identity, but the open-ended questions provide enough latitude to not presume the location of important identity work. I encouraged respondents to educate me about when, where, and how they became aware of, or constructed, their racial self-understanding. A *life history narrative* approach allowed respondents to select the instances and sites that were pivotal to their experience of race. I probed for “magnified moments” (Hochschild 2003) (either prideful or shameful) when interviewees’ awareness of their racial self was

²⁷ I also had a two-generation family that consisted of the first and second generations as well as a family that only consisted of a second generation woman (her teenage daughter declined the interview).

²⁸ See Appendix D for “family trees” that pictorially illustrate the twenty-nine families in the sample. Note that all surnames are pseudonyms yet I coded them to maintain their Spanish or non-Spanish sounding integrity.

intensified. Considering that “social life is itself *storied*” and that “‘experience’ is constituted through narratives” (Somers 1994: 38), life history narratives are an appropriate way to try to gain insight into how people comprehend the social world and navigate their way through it.

My rationale for conducting life history narratives is rooted in the social psychological insight that “*the life story* reveals how people construct meaningful accounts of their lives, selecting from a myriad of experiences those events into a coherent and personally meaningful life story” (Thorne 2000: 46, emphasis in original). Life stories are interpretations grounded in facts that people “make,” and thus have an identity-making function. Avril Thorne’s (2000) theorization of personal memories²⁹ suggests that those personal stories that get remembered are highly emotionally charged. Thus, those memories that are told to me, as a researcher, will have retained enough emotional charge over time to have likely been influential in personal development. Further, with regard to inter-generational interaction, Thorne shows that the parent-child nexus is the most frequent site of self-telling in childhood and that parents’ storytelling is often done to teach the younger generation by example. This background adds credibility to the three-generations of a family approach that I employ. Through this interview triangulation (first, second, and third generations as well as sometimes a spouse or sibling) I am able to trace which life experiences were transmitted from one generation to the next, charting a flow of significant life stories across generations.

²⁹ Avril Thorne defines personal memory as “the subset of autobiographical memory that involves the recollection of specific emotional events from one’s past, events that are enduring aspects of the self-concept.” Thorne, Avril. 2000. “Personal memory telling and personality development.” *Personality & Social Psychology Review* 4:45-56.

◊ *Recruitment*

I mailed “letters of introduction” to numerous high schools, Hispanic Chambers of Commerce (HCC), and Catholic churches that hold Spanish masses around the San Francisco Bay Area and Santa Barbara County. I followed up with phone calls to all the people to whom I sent letters. Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, followed by high schools, provided the most initial referrals for interview subjects.

Upon invitation, I attended monthly “mixers” hosted by a number of the HCCs in the Bay area and in the Santa Barbara County region. At my first HCC mixer one of the chamber members made clear that his willingness to connect me with interview subjects was part of the spirit of the HCC: “That’s what it’s all about, *mija*, community. We’re supposed to help each other out.” This philosophy made sense given that HCCs were founded in order to bring Hispanics together in a friendly and cooperative environment where one purpose of the organization is community and assistance.

My efforts to integrate into the Hispanic Chambers of Commerce communities were multiple: I attended monthly mixers, placed advertisements in the weekly newsletters, and distributed requests for volunteers to administrators at the Chamber who then disbursed the call to their board of directors and/or membership roster. I sent a project description and request for interviewees directly to the membership where email lists were available. I attended one “block party” in a Bay Area city that was sponsored by the local HCC. I met other people representing various organizations (for example, the Girl Scouts and local news presses) at that event, made contact with them, and followed up shortly thereafter to ask about referrals from within their organizations. On

more than one occasion I was invited to place an ad in local and bilingual newspapers and newsletters, which I did.

For recruitment at high schools, I initially contacted the principal and was usually re-directed to a vice principal, guidance counselors, bi-lingual liaisons, or teachers (most often Spanish language teachers). I worked closely with a few vice principals who either put me in direct contact with students or who introduced me to teachers with whom I subsequently worked to identify third generation Mexican American students. In both my Northern and Southern California fieldsites, I was invited to work with guidance counselors to identify the population of students I sought as well as to give presentations to select classrooms.

At a high school in my Northern California site, I was invited to work with the bilingual liaison to identify students that fit my third generation Mexican American criterion. But we discovered that third generation Mexican Americans were hard to find. I found it telling that when I asked high school administrators in both Southern and Northern California to help me identify third generation Mexican Americans they generally pointed me to Spanish classes or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.³⁰ These two populations *did not* contain third generation students but first, 1.5, and occasionally second generation students. There is a common-sense understanding of what it means to be “third generation Mexican American,” which is how I phrased what I was looking for. Administrators (and teachers, though less frequently) mainly heard “Mexican” and then sent me in the direction of Spanish and ESL classes. The phrase

³⁰ To this same point, I recruited through one local city college system as well and was routed to an office dedicated to assisting low-income students in their transition to the city college office. Interestingly, this time I was not routed to Spanish or bilingual teachers on the assumption that third generation Mexican Americans are Spanish speakers. Instead, I was channeled to the low-income assistance office because somewhere along the line someone correlated “3rd generation Mexican Americans” with “low income.”

specifying “third generation” got lost, even by very well-meaning administrators. Another reason for the difficulty in finding these third generation students may be assimilation itself. Perhaps these helpful school administrators could not point them out because they blended in with the rest of the student population and could not easily be identified by look, language, or last name. While well-intentioned administrators thought that third generation Mexican American would correlate with class type or tracking level, this assessment—at least for the third generation students—was inaccurate.³¹ Indeed, the third generation students I ended up locating through schools were fully integrated into regular track classes and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) curriculum.

I had considerable difficulty making inroads into Catholic Church communities. Priests or church staff people with whom I spoke were protective of their church membership and reluctant to provide leads. The few referrals I received from this source tended to decline to participate.

I sent out a mass electronic-mail advertisement to several of University of California, Berkeley undergraduate student and Boalt Law School organizations that were Latino, Chicano, or race related. At the end of the advertisement I asked that the email be forwarded if the receiver knows of more appropriate recipients. The numerous responses I received made it obvious that my e-mail had made its way across the nation. Since this study is circumscribed by geography, I eliminated all responses outside of my two regions in California.

After locating interviewees using this modified theoretical sampling strategy, I proceeded with snowball sampling. Interviewees who were active and well connected in

³¹ As I argue in Chapter Four, however, these administrator’s hunches about the correlation between race/ethnicity and tracking level are factually accurate for first and second generation students.

their community were most forthcoming about providing referrals. While I did not get referrals from every interviewee, I often got a short list of names from those interviewees who had strong social networks. I was able to interview a number of families recommended to me by interviewees. This was a fruitful source of respondents for two reasons: first, current interviewees were familiar with my project and could correctly identify others who would fit the profile and, second, the fact that I came “recommended” by a trusted colleague or friend encouraged participation.

The chart below details the number of families I located through each recruitment strategy. Note that while my sample is mostly middle-class, it is drawn from various sources in attempt to minimize other kinds of sampling bias.

Table 1.3

SOURCES OF RESPONDENT POOL*

	High Schools	Hispanic Chambers of Commerce	U.C. Berkeley	Catholic Churches	Email Chain**
Initial Contact	5	10	3	-0-	4
Snowball (Referral)	4	2	1	-0-	-0-

*Numbers in each cell refer to an entire family (n=29) rather than an individual (n=67).

**I include this category since some people responded to email announcements that friends or colleagues forwarded to them. It was impossible to trace the origin of these forwarded emails, so I thus created a different category.

◊Working within a Family & Auxiliary Interviews

Once I conducted an interview with the initial contact in a family, that person usually facilitated introductions to other family members. The eldest generation (first

generation) was often the most difficult to access because they were often in frail health or reclusive and their offspring were vigilant about safeguarding their health and privacy.

If an interviewee's spouse or partner was in the house at the time of the interview, in the interest of fostering trust between the interviewee, his/her partner, and myself, I invited the partner to sit in on the conversation. Generally, spouses seemed to appreciate this move toward inclusion, whether or not they chose to sit down and observe (or participate in) the interview. Two spouses of male interviewees actively participated in the interviews.³² When I invited one interviewee's wife to join us, she politely replied that it was her husband's interview but that she'd be there for "facts-checking." Her husband continued the joke that if I "wanted to get everything right, she'd need to be there." In these two cases, interviewing a respondent in the presence of his/her spouse was a fruitful way to conduct the interview. In this "mini-focus group of two," the spouse sometimes jogged the memory of the interviewee, supplied greater detail or opinion, and generally made the interview a more collaborative process.

◇Refusals to Participate

Most who declined indicated that they were simply "not interested" and did not specify further. A few others offered more specific reasons. A woman I interviewed said that her fifteen-year-old daughter had expressed concern over how I would view her. The girl had remarked to her mother, "But I don't know anything!" as if the interview were a test of her knowledge. While I asked the mother to assure her that I just wanted to hear some of her thoughts and opinions, her ambivalence remained and she ultimately

³² The spouses of Lee Morelos and Sergio Diaz. While I draw from the content of their narratives, I do so sparingly. Both spouses are of Mexican American descent but they did not fit the generational criteria I had set for the project.

declined the interview. Another man said that he thought he'd "pass on it...it might get too personal." A younger generation individual would sometimes say that "because of a grandparent being ill" he/she could not do an interview either. A larger percentage of respondents with a frail grandparent, however, would just state that the grandparent was not available but they themselves would be happy to participate.

◇ *Interview Format*

My research question about how racial identity gets transmitted through generations in a family and other social arenas directed the research methodology. I thus began each interview by asking for a narrative about the individual's biography, and then asked about his or her family's history. While the family is the center of gravity for my research, respondents also described other institutions and interactive spaces that affected their experiences of race. Investigating how racial identity develops both inside and outside of families necessitated a qualitative research approach that allowed for theory generation.

The interviews were semi-structured, following an interview schedule, and lasted for two hours, on average. I attended to three distinct levels of inquiry in my interview schedule: 1) the institutional (family, but also the educational system, religious organizations, government agencies, corporate or other large work environments), 2) the social or interactional (face-to-face or other micro-level exchanges that occur in daily life), and 3) social-psychological (cognitive and emotional processes that constitute a person's internal world, subjectivity, or "psychic reality") (Chodorow 1999). Such a

comprehensive interview encouraged respondents to speak to all levels and allowed me to analyze how formative my respondents found experiences within each level of social life.

I conducted the majority of the interviews in English, and a handful in Spanish. I had a Spanish interview schedule and consent forms with me for those who preferred to speak with me in Spanish. I tape recorded and transcribed all of the interviews. I also took fieldnotes immediately following interviews, attempting to capture intonation, speed of speech, body language, and my own rapport and reaction to the respondent. Understanding that the interview consists of more than words alone but includes vocal quality and body language (Anderson and Jack 1991), I documented in my fieldnotes memorable verbal exchanges along with non-verbal cues.

◇ *Qualitative Data Analysis*

I used the interview transcripts to cull emergent themes from the data, in the manner described by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw to render the data meaningful and to build an analysis (Emerson 1995). My project was inductive, so using Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory approach, I worked from the ground up to construct an analysis that honored the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I allowed themes and analytic categories to emerge from the data and following systematic, detailed analysis of the data, I generated theory based on the patterns uncovered. Qualitative methods and grounded theory are necessary approaches in the study of racial identity formation because they allow for complex human experience to comprise the basis of social theory.

This inductive approach does not presume a theoretical framework, but instead acknowledges "we [researchers] need to attend more to the narrator than to our own

agendas” (Anderson and Jack 1991). Anderson and Jack (1991) are proponents of the feminist method wherein they try to uncover women’s previously undervalued perspectives, to listen for women’s “muted voices.” I believe that their techniques are transferable to other marginalized populations, such as ethnic minority groups, because minority groups have also suffered from historically “muted voices.” Thus, I utilized this method of listening for thoughts and emotions that run contrary to or have been “talked over” by dominant voices. I tried to listen to respondent’s narratives on their own terms and understand their life, choices, and constraints, from their vantage point.

◇Limitations

Because I did not interview a random sample, the generalizability of my findings is limited. A national study, interviewing families in different regions of the country would allow for regional comparisons. Comparing states with different immigration trajectories and different state histories (with regard both to Mexican American activism as well as to state policies) would provide useful contrasts.

While my findings are not generalizable to the nation as a whole, I did cover two urban regions in California, the U.S. state with the highest Mexican Americans population. The generalizability of my sample is further circumscribed by the fact that my sample over-represents middle class families. I concentrated on a middle class respondent pool because one would expect this population to be the most assimilated. As such, investigating this middle class population’s degree of racialization reveals much about the U.S. racial hierarchy and the assimilation possibilities for Mexican Americans (and perhaps Latinos more generally). While this middle class focus was an artifact of

the research design, this leaves open for investigation both wealthy and poor families since racial identity formation and incorporation patterns may vary by class.

◇Strengths

Even given these limitations, my research method has many strengths. First, the research is unusual because it gathered narratives focusing on life history experiences. Only in-depth interviews would canvas such a variety of time frames and topics. My three generation approach allows me to triangulate the data from within those three focal points, finding both points of commonality and disparity as family members describe both their individual and collective history and outlook. Furthermore, interviews encouraged the respondents to reach beyond the family and tell me about other social arenas that influenced their racial identity formation.

Chapter Layout

Part One of this dissertation consists of two chapters that look at the three generation families “vertically,” that is, from first, second, to third generation. These chapters follow the racial and cultural incorporation trajectories of two Mexican American three-generation families. Each chapter highlights a family that typifies one of the two primary modes of incorporation (“thinned attachment” and “cultural maintenance”) into the U.S. Each chapter shows how, and by what mechanisms, the content of racial identity changes or maintains itself through family generations. Chapter Two describes an upwardly mobile, “thinned attachment” family that has been assimilationist in its integration into the U.S. and has weakened its attachment to its Mexican heritage. Chapter Three follows

an upwardly mobile family that preserves its Mexican cultural knowledge, tradition, and pride. This chapter highlights the importance of historical moment in influencing the racial identity and assimilation.

Part Two uses social themes and generations, rather than families, as its organizing principle. Chapter Four uses a generational analysis to examine situations of discrimination, showing which sites and modes of discrimination are common across all three generations and which are unique to specific generations. I examine how perception of discrimination, coping mechanisms, and resistances are generationally patterned. In Chapter Five, on education, I argue that schools teach—both formally and informally—that race is a vital feature of how people are categorized and treated. I analyze how parents (mostly second-generation in my sample) refer to their own experiences in their natal families and in schools (especially with regard to gender and racial discrimination) as they craft parenting strategies to encourage their children’s education. Chapter Six considers variation in identity and assimilation among third generation young adults, children of both intra- and inter-married couples. Current literature concentrates on life outcomes of this generation whereas I analyze how these Americans conceive of their racial identity and investigate the social dimensions that bear on this process. The Conclusion discusses the implications of my findings for public policy debates. This final chapter positions my respondents’ narratives in dialogue with national discourses about the meaning of immigration, race, and American culture.

CHAPTER TWO

RACE ACROSS GENERATIONS: THINNED ATTACHMENT

How do Mexican American immigrants and their successive family generations incorporate into the racial and cultural landscape of the U.S.? I posit two pathways of adaptation: “thinned attachment” and “cultural maintenance.” This chapter traces three generations of the Montes/Rosenberg³³ family, demonstrating how each generation makes both conscious and unconscious choices to move away from Mexican culture. In this “thinned attachment” pattern, the cultural linkage to Mexican traditions weakens with each succeeding generation. Families such as the Montes/Rosenberg family who experience thinned attachment do so as a result of focusing their attention on the U.S. and steering their attention away from Mexico. Thinned attachment refers to individuals who do not consider “being Mexican” a significant portion of their social identities. Instead, they demonstrate a relaxed expression of Mexican cultural traits and inconsistently attempt to preserve a meaningful Mexican identity for themselves or their offspring.

Several features are key in routing families toward thinned attachment. They include: religion, gender and gender ideologies, peer networks (including geography and educational experiences), family memory and teaching, marital partner, cultural toolkit

³³ I chose to showcase this family as an “ideal type” because they most clearly demonstrate the analytic category of thinned attachment that I am advancing in this chapter. There are ways in which this family is not typical but given that each family has particularities, I felt like the commonalities between the Montes/Rosenberg family and other families I categorized as thinned attachment far outweighed their differences. Two primary differences between this family and others in its analytic category are: 1) that the second generation intermarried with a Jew (while some second generation individuals married non-Hispanic whites, most married Mexican Americans or Latinos) and 2) that the interviewees from this family discussed here are all female, inadvertently providing some gendered material that may not emerge from mixed-sex family lines. Note that I did interview two third generation members of the family (one male and one female); while I utilize data from the female’s interview here, I use data from the male’s interview in Chapter Six.

(namely language), and phenotype. These factors can work in any combination, each factor possessing a different degree of salience. While thinned attachment denotes a dilution of cultural significance in everyday life, their Mexican heritage is still a viable social identity for thinned attachment families even if it is not experienced as a primary social identity in everyday life.

The first generation immigrant and matriarch of the family, Maria Montes, lived out her Mexican culture in the United States. She raised her daughter, Tamara Montes, with an eye toward upward mobility in the U.S. This approach translated into not emphasizing Spanish language maintenance, traditions, or endogamy. Tamara's life story reveals that she veered away from Mexican traditionalism in order to avoid the gender oppression she saw her mother endure. Seeking upward mobility and gender equality, Tamara obtained a college education, abandoned Catholicism, and married a non-Mexican White man. In turn, Tamara's children (only one of whom is focused on here) are continuing this "thinned attachment" relationship to Mexican culture as they have virtually lost Spanish language skills, are firmly embedded in white institutions (namely schools), have embraced their father's Judaism, and expect to marry non-Mexicans. I focused on an inter-racial family because of the high degree of marital assimilation among Latinos by the third generation; Latino intermarriages with Whites exceeded fifty-percent in the third generation during the 1990s (Lee and Bean 2004: 222). Furthermore, among my interviewees, the three out of twenty-nine second generation interviewees who intermarried with whites were on the thinned attachment pathway, buttressing the argument that marital partner plays a significant role in the incorporation trajectory of a family. This chapter argues that one of the two modal patterns of

incorporation of Mexican immigrant families into the U.S. is a high degree of structural assimilation that is accompanied by a “thinned attachment” to Mexican culture.

State of Knowledge

Assimilation theorists assert that assimilation—the process of adaptation to a host country—is the inevitable destiny for immigrant groups (Gordon 1964; Park, Burgess, McKenzie, and Wirth 1925). Milton Gordon (1964) predicted seven subprocesses of assimilation: cultural/behavioral (acculturation), structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional (absence of prejudice), behavior receptional (absence of discrimination), and civic (Gordon 1964: 71). Gordon attempted to provide a “rigorous and systematic analysis of...assimilation which would ‘break it all down’ into all the possible relevant factors...which could conceivably be included under its rubric” (61).

Assimilation theorists are concerned with how adaptation occurs at particular levels (such as structural, identificational, marital, etc.). Focusing on cultural and racial assimilation, I identify social, structural, and historical mechanisms that influence intergenerational change and assimilation. The two prototypical modes of incorporation that my predominantly upwardly mobile middle-class³⁴ sample yielded are: first, thinned attachment and second, cultural maintenance. The Montes/Rosenberg family experienced the thinned attachment assimilation trajectory. The next chapter will showcase two families who demonstrate the cultural maintenance alternative. Together,

³⁴ I remind readers that my sample is limited by a lack of class heterogeneity. The experiences of families that do not experience upward economic mobility but are poor and working-class by the third generation in the U.S. most likely have decidedly different incorporation patterns and racial identity formulations than those presented here.

these two chapters refine assimilation theory by uncovering key points at which assimilation either moves forward or stalls.

First Generation: Maria Montes

Sixty-five year old Maria Montes is a devout Catholic, bilingual in English and Spanish, and the matriarch of her family. She invited me to conduct the interview at her home after her morning weekday mass. One of six siblings, Maria emigrated from Mexico when she was four year old with her mother and sister, while her brothers stayed in Mexico. Her mother immigrated in part due to the pull of social networks, as one of her brothers and her eldest son were already in the U.S. and encouraged her to move. They crossed the Rio Grande River and took the train into the U.S. Upon arrival, she worked in the fields picking potatoes and green beans and then at the packinghouse. Maria would join her mother in the fields when she was young or would be under the care of her older sister, a “second mother” caretaker for her. Twelve years later Maria’s mother brought two of her other sons over to the U.S. Maria weaves her immigration tale:

Back then it wasn’t as hard as it is [now]—immigration. You just come and go—so they just went across the river and came over here.... I remember I had that faraway vision of myself being on top of one of my uncles’ shoulders.... So they just walked by. It wasn’t deep. I was on my uncle’s shoulders and we passed and were all excited, because we were coming to the United States! We were all excited. They make it sound so wonderful, you know? You’re going to have a wonderful life over here. It turns out it’s not that easy as people think that it is. So my mother had a hard life trying to rear us. [She was] being a mom and a dad because she never remarried after my dad died.

Maria’s family’s emigration from Mexico was economically motivated. Once here in the U.S., her family’s hopes for life being automatically “wonderful”—as some returning migrants stories would have them believe—were dashed. They worked hard in order to

gain a financial foothold in their new country. Additionally, they served as an informal gateway into the U.S. agricultural labor market for relatives and non-relatives alike who were migrants:

My mom really worked hard. And we worked pretty hard, too. Because every summer vacation we'd hit the fields. We'd pick walnuts, we'd pick grapes.... We were going to have to help her so that she could be able to maintain the household. Because it's very hard to feed so many people. And then my mother—she's good-hearted—she always had relatives coming from Mexico. We have a very large family. And they'd come and stay with her.... So we used to live in an apartment...and it had a very, very big room...it looked like a dance studio.... And I remember we had cots. Like in a hospital. And we would just divide it with sheets when families came. We always had the house full of people. She was always helping them. [They would] be with my mother until they settled down, and then they'd move on.

Social networks played an important role in encouraging Maria's emigration from Mexican and in her families continued ties with Mexican emigrants. As a child, Maria's family was poor. Maria reveals a common conflation of race and class:

We didn't have much. We used to use hand-me-down clothes because my mother could barely make it, you know? I used to wear her shoes to school. I used to be ridiculed. I used to stuff them [the shoes] with newspaper and I used to feel really embarrassed. Because I was a Mexican, they thought that we dressed that way [because] that's the Mexican way.

As others mistook class for race, Maria had to battle her lower-class status and her misunderstood Mexican identity. Due to an expanding economy, Maria secured a well-paying office manager job for a small manufacturing company even with a lack of education. Now, in her older age, Maria has achieved a stable middle class status, even owning more than one property in Santa Barbara.

Even while processes of adaptation to the U.S. compel some distance from her home country (such as learning English and adopting American customs), Maria deliberately attempts to instill pride in her children and grandchildren about their Mexican heritage:

We're Mexican and we have to be proud of the fact that we come from Mexico and never be ashamed that you are from Mexico. I said, "I know there are lots of people that look down on Mexicans, but you have to be proud. That's what we are." ...I'm not ashamed to say that I'm a Mexican. ...Like [my granddaughter] Jillian: she has white blood and Mexican blood, so she'll be proud of both of them.

Maria makes a conscious choice to instill racial pride in her offspring. Despite her intentions, however, structural surroundings that promote American ways of life pulled her family toward Americanization. For instance, Maria sees Catholicism and Mexican identity as closely bound together. In a country founded upon Protestantism, being Catholic is integral to the meaning of Mexican heritage for many. Indeed, the change Maria is most concerned with as she reviews her family's progression through the generations is not the thinning of culture but rather dissolution of Catholic faith and a moral code generally. Pre-marital sexual activity saddens Maria: "Sex is so misused right now. It's just amazing.... And I feel sad.... Going from one partner to another partner. To me, that is very heartbreaking.... The morals are not there anymore." She is ever careful, however, not to condemn the actions of her family members out of a desire to avoid alienating them. Nevertheless, she has had many debates with her children and grandchildren over religion and values. She concludes, "These are conversations I don't want to have because I know it's not going to end right and why push it? Sometimes they do get on my nerves [when] they start talking about their beliefs.... I just walk away

because I don't want to fight." Thus, Maria's family's departure from Catholicism is one way that the process of thinning is operating.

Maria's experience typifies a "survival mode of parenting" prevalent among poor first generation immigrants (and to a lesser extent some second generation individuals). I suggest that a "survival mode of parenting" exists in those families where the parents' focus was on providing for their family economically rather than self-consciously supplying their children with a strong sense of culture. In this conception, culture can be seen as something of a luxury, although I do not mean to imply by "luxury" that culture is only found in locales of high culture (museums, literature, operas, theaters) as some scholars would imply (Bourdieu 1984). Certainly, culture is found in food, traditions, religion, family knowledge, and storytelling, some of which exist to varying degrees in all families. Other scholars view culture as a process, forever evolving, and better viewed as a whole with porous boundaries rather than as vertically-stacked tiers with rigid boundaries (Griswold 1987; Levine 1988). Even given this wider notion of culture that encapsulates both elite and common (or highbrow and lowbrow) sources, families struggling for economic survival had less free time to endow their children with this cultural backdrop.

A "survival mode of parenting" often leads to spotty transmission of cultural knowledge. Recalling that she was a single mother for a while after her divorce, Maria offers an image of the "survival mode of parenting":

It's hard to bring family up.... You don't have that much time to spend time with your kids and you're working, and you come home and you've got to do the cleaning and you've got to do the cooking. [When]...my kids were growing up I didn't spend much time with my kids.... Because to survive you have to have two families working...especially when you work at low jobs where you don't get

that [well] paid. [A]t the beginning that's where we were—at the packinghouse, any place where we could...at least [get] money coming in to be able to support the family.... Back then we didn't get involved much with the kids.

As a working-class mother, Maria's parenting style was one of "accomplishment of natural growth," wherein the children's time was largely self-organized and parents conceived of their duties as about providing food, clothing, shelter, safety, and love (Lareau 2002; Lareau 2003). Because of her "survival mode of parenting"—a constant struggle to provide basic necessities—Maria did not have spare time to endow her children with cultural lessons or an overabundance of family knowledge. Without conscientious instruction of Mexican culture and Spanish language, the structural environment of American institutions looms large and teaches children American cultural behaviors.

One element of Mexican culture that markedly declines through generations is Spanish language skills (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut and Portes 2001). Spanish was overtly discouraged in education during the schooling years of the second generation. Further, immigrant parents tended to want their children to be poised to take advantage of opportunities in the U.S., which would require English proficiency. Some families actively encouraged the wholesale adoption of English at school and at home; others ambivalently attempted bilingualism; and still others maintained Spanish as the primary home language. While most families in my sample lost Spanish fluency by the third generation, the families range along the full spectrum of language preference and usage.³⁵ Maria offers a response to the question "how important

³⁵ See Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 in Chapter Three.

is the Spanish language to you?" in a way typical of those who would have liked to preserve Spanish in theory but had difficulty doing so in practice:

It is really important that we continue to...maintain our language. ...I wish with all my heart that my kids would know it more and would pass it on to their kids. ...Little by little they keep forgetting the Spanish...and they lose it. It's so sad, because it's so important that they have that language that comes with our heritage.

While Maria upholds the value of Spanish language, she did not enforce Spanish at home and her children therefore are not fluently bilingual.

Just as Spanish usage changes after generations in the U.S., so too do traditional gender dynamics (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Gender and gender dynamics also help drive thinned attachment. All of the first generation women I spoke with reported (or complained) that their husbands were patriarchal and domineering. The second generation also noted the subjugation of their mothers, their sisters, or themselves at the hands of overbearing patriarchal fathers. As Hondagneu-Sotelo notes, Mexican immigrant women benefit from the U.S.'s more egalitarian gender role expectations because it affords them more voice and liberty. Hondagneu-Sotelo writes, "After immigration, marriage patterns that once seemed set in stone may shift...and new living and working arrangements change the rules that organize daily life...[such as] more egalitarian gender relations in household divisions of labor, family decision-making processes, and women's spatial mobility" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994: 98). Most interviewees wished to dispense with *machismo* (a rigidly male patriarchal gender role).

Maria actively engaged the process of acculturation that leads to thinned attachment. Maria suffered under a controlling and abusive first husband and

consequently discouraged her granddaughter, Jillian, from marrying a Mexican.³⁶ While she issued this advice in the form of a joke, her granddaughter got the message. I asked Maria, “As you advise your children—and now your grandchildren—in choosing someone to marry, how important is it to you that they marry someone who is of Mexican background?” She replied:

Well, I don't really think that it's important that they have to be Mexican. In fact, I tease Jillian and I tell her, “Keep away the Mexicans! Macho guys!” ...My two daughters have married white [men]. I think that they should look for someone that they're compatible with...that they love each other. And whether they're American, Mexican, Chinese—whatever.... Steer clear of the Mexicans! [Laughs]

JMV: And that's because you don't like the macho guys?

Maria: I just teased her on that. There are lots of nice Mexican men, too, that make wonderful husbands. Wonderful. But unfortunately, in our culture it tends to be more where the men want to have the power over the women. And they could go to extremes, you know? They're boss.... That's the way it is with Mexican men. But they're changing. I think that they're changing. The new generation is not coming out as bad as...when we were young.

The men, they always have the pants and they're the ones that have to boss. And the woman just has to be submissive and do whatever they want. [T]hat's why I tell her to keep away from the Mexican macho guys! Macho guys, I tell her! [Laughs]³⁷

In this discussion of marital advice for her children and grandchildren, Maria oscillates between unprejudiced principles of equality and her visceral reaction against “Mexican

³⁶ Mexican American writer Sandra Cisneros wrote a short story entitled “Never Marry a Mexican.” The first lines read: “Never marry a Mexican, my ma said once and always. She said this because of my father. She said this though she was Mexican too.” (p. 68) Cisneros, Sandra. 1992. *Woman Hollering Creek and other stories*. New York: Vintage Books.

³⁷ I do not have data on what advice Maria gave her sons. It would be interesting to know whether she encouraged her sons to marry Mexican women or not. It is worth considering that Maria's advice to Jillian may be motivated by unspoken gendered assumptions that women can marry non-Mexicans because women are bearers of culture, whereas men may be encouraged to find ethnic partners for the same reason. See Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender & Nation*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

macho guys” due to her own aggrieved experience. In her scholarship on love, Ann Swidler (2001) argues that multiple framings of a single issue can coexist side by side and be called upon at any time. Swidler uncovers two common tropes of love that are employed by married couples as they explain their love story and ensuing marital life. The “mythic love” narrative serves to uphold and romanticize the institution of marriage in contemporary America. Alternatively, “prosaic realism” is a framing that people employ to discuss the day-to-day life of a marriage, a love that is often ambiguous, gradual, uncertain, and banal (Swidler 2001). Often the same individual will use multiple framings at different times to explain one’s behavior, feelings, or life in general. Maria is an example of how people can employ different narrative framings in quick succession. Maria uses the trope of “mythic love” that forefronts compatibility, love, and equality with no regard for race. She also issues admonitions against Mexican men that are in direct reaction to her own unhappy marriage with a Mexican man. In this way, culture writ large and personal experience (culture writ small) organizes Maria’s lines of thought and action as she considers the welfare of her offspring.

Maria points out that gender dynamics are changing for the better with the new generation of young men. She cites her son and her grandson as examples of Mexican men who would be good helpful partners. Maria’s observations are in concert with Arlie Hochschild’s (1989) work on family life and work-life balance after the feminist revolution of the ‘70s and women’s entrance into the labor force. Hochschild outlines the family archetypes of “traditional,” “transitional,” and “egalitarian,” family forms that range in gender equality operating norms (Hochschild 1989; Hochschild 1997). Maria

notes change she has seen as generations are born, age, and replenish one another, each one reared in a historical context different from the one prior:

Look at my grandson. Even my son....he's not the macho guy, you know? ...There's a lot of young boys now...that are really nice. Heaven forbid that a man helps his wife washing the dishes or helping with the kids, way back when.... And nowadays you see it a lot, where the husband helps the wife. They clean the house. They cook for them. They help them a lot. I mean, you're equal. The wife is going to work—why shouldn't the husband help around the house?

Within Maria's own three-generation family, she sees gender and marital dynamics change from traditional to egalitarian. Maria is pleased by this revision of gender roles. When I asked what about her culture she would like to see changed, she harkened back to tearing down traditionalism and *machismo* and replacing it with gender equality: "Yeah, you wear pants, but I wear pants, too. So we're equal.... Let's bring our children [up] to realize that man and woman, it's nice to help each other out. These are women's chores? There's no difference between women's chores and men's chores—you know? We're a family. We're here to help each other." While Maria is unsettled by the slow detachment from Mexican culture her family is undergoing, she is simultaneously pleased.

While Maria is saddened to see some of that connection to her homeland slipping, she is gladdened to perceive a shift in the macho male ways that had oppressed her. While Maria instills in her progeny knowledge of their Mexican heritage, her references to Mexican culture often switch into "distilled" forms or universal principles. When I asked "what about your culture or your experience do you want to see transmitted to your children and grandchildren?," Maria began by shielding them from prejudice by saying they should "never be embarrassed of what [they] are." She then moved to platitudes about success and independence: "Never give up. Dreams are so important. I mean—

what is life if you don't have dreams? ...Never give up. There is always a tomorrow. And as long as there is a tomorrow, there is hope." Maria has instructed her offspring in life lessons as well as some Mexican culture. Rather than dwell on preserving particular Mexican traits, in part due to her survival mode of parenting, Maria reared her children to combine both Mexican and American cultural features. While Maria was complicit in her family's thinned attachment trajectory by deemphasizing Spanish language and traditions, these linguistic and cultural accommodations were necessary for her family's upward mobility in the U.S. She did not shirk her Mexican culture for lack of emotional commitment but rather loosened those ties for pragmatic reasons. To the limited extent that Maria is trying to re-infuse her family with Mexican culture, this could very well be in response to her observation of her offspring's thinning attachment.³⁸ As we will see as I profile the next two generations, Maria's family develops a thinned attachment to Mexican culture. This is due to increased generational distance from Mexico, egalitarian gender ideologies, intermarriage at the second generation, a religious conversion, and heterogeneous peer networks. Thus, the Montes/Rosenberg family's thinned attachment occurs as a result of conscious choices of accommodation as well as the sway of structural surroundings.

³⁸ In contrast to the Montes/Rosenberg family, other thinned attachment families demonstrate the pattern of feeling ashamed of their Mexican background until they achieve a middle or upper class standing. Drawing from a different family narrative, dodging (or denying) one's Mexican identity occurs until socioeconomic success is achieved at which point it can be reclaimed and shame can be converted into pride. Two sociological principles are at work here, I think. First is the fear that one's race will be a social, economic, or occupational handicap and so in order to achieve on those levels dissemblance is necessary. The second is the notion that success can "buy" racial pride, both for one's self as well as in the eyes of one's peers. This is akin to the idea that "money whitens," except in this scenario of "buying" racial pride, socioeconomic advancement does not assume acceptance into white networks, nor does it preclude racial pride.

Second Generation: Tamara (Montes) Rosenberg

Tamara Montes, whose married surname is Rosenberg, is the daughter of two Mexican immigrants and was born in California. This makes her heritage Mexican and her citizenship American. When I asked her what racial or ethnic title she uses to describe herself, she went through contortions to determine a title that fit her. At first she said, “I don’t know that I identify with being an American or Mexican.” While her initial reaction was uncertainty, she learned her first lesson in racism and segregation when she was in elementary school. Realizing that she was never invited over to her Chinese best friend’s house, upon inquiry her friend reported, “Well, my mom doesn’t want me to hang out with Mexicans because Mexicans are dumb.” Tamara acknowledged that, even today, other people’s perceptions of her matter in how she thinks of herself: “People will talk to me when I go to the grocery store and they’ll respond in Spanish. And I’ll think to myself, ‘God, do I look Mexican?’ Of course I look Mexican!” While it is problematic to reduce “looking Mexican” to some stereotypical image because that image belies the diversity of physical appearance of Mexicans, an issue that will be explored in Chapter Six, Tamara knows that being perceived one way or another influences how people interact with her. Mary Waters (1990) noted that how people racially categorize one another (often based on phenotype) pushes people to voluntarily claim that racial ascription. Waters found that there is a “*complex interplay* among the different aspects of an individual’s ethnic identification,” which is in part what leads people to change ethnic self-titles throughout their lifecycle (Waters 1990: 23, emphasis added).

Tamara shows this “complex interplay” of considerations at work as she mulls over whether her self-label has changed over time. Due to historical circumstance

(1960's), social context (college where she was a numerical minority), and geography (Europe), Tamara's narrative provides a sense of the complexity behind claiming a racial/ethnic title:

When I was at the University of California [UC], Davis it was "Chicana." I think because you wanted to make a statement that you were proud of what your background was, and that you were going to be politically active.... I was [on the board] of the MEChA³⁹ one year—I realized that we really had to be active in order to make some change.

As a numerical minority on a college campus, Tamara was pulled to political activism around her race. When she moved to Italy for a time after college she faced a different set of political sensibilities and questions that prompted a reorganization of her self-perception:

Going to Europe was such an eye-opening experience. Because people would ask me, "What are you?" I'd say "Mexican." "You were born in Mexico?" "No." "Where were you born?" "California." "So then you're American?" "No." And I really had to struggle with that. I was constantly having to tell people, "Well, I'm Chicana, this is what this means." Oh, forget it! It's just not worth it.

In recent years, back in the U.S., Tamara has continuously been asked about her preferred racial title. Now she settles on "'Mexican' just because my parents were from Mexico. But... I'm not trying to make a political statement either way." Tamara shifted her racial/ethnic label according to historical moment, geography, political purpose, and her parents' nation of birth.

Tamara's childhood years were lean: "I don't think I ever realized that we were poor. I remember...having hot chocolate and bread for dinner. [I didn't] realize that it

³⁹ MEChA is an acronym for "Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán," a student organization created in 1969 that seeks to promote an awareness of Chicano history by education and political action. The motto of MEChA is "La Unión Hace La Fuerza," or "Unity Creates Strength".

was because we didn't have food." Tamara saw her parents work really hard and eventually achieve a stable occupation and a middle class status. She credits belief in the American dream—a central American ideology (Hochschild 1995)—for her parents' optimism:

My parents were really hard working. And I think that's the underlying lesson—that if you work hard—The American dream—right? If you work hard you get ahead. The typical immigrant dream. And my parents lived that.... My dad ended up owning a little mom and pop grocery store. ...My mom [was] able to purchase her own house. Not only one—she owns a few properties. And ran a business. Raised her kids. So just work ethic.

Her parents' work ethic and an expanding structure of opportunity were the keys to their ability to live the American dream. Just as the ideology of the American dream runs strong in contemporary American discourse and fuels immigrants' optimism (Kao 1995), so too does the ideology of American individualism (Bellah 1986) and the philosophy of "pulling one up by one's bootstraps." In the Montes family, the American Dream invigorated their work ethic. This work ethic, in turn, became the tool which helped them achieve their aspirations. While the philosophies of the American dream and American individualism work in tandem in this instance to reinforce one another, the downside of this individualistic logic is the potential to blame those who do not succeed by claiming they lack personal qualities which lead to success.⁴⁰ These same philosophies, however,

⁴⁰ For an ethnographic account of how seeing (or not seeing) structural barriers to educational, occupational, and financial success lead to different explanations for minority groups' failure or stymied progress in these arenas, see MacLeod, Jay. 2004. *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Boulder: Westview Press.

if applied to a less upwardly mobile family, could be used to obscure structural barriers that impede individual agency.⁴¹

As will be explored in Chapter Five, education has a tremendous influence on how students perceive their racial/ethnic background. Many second generation Mexican Americans, like Tamara, grew up in a Spanish-speaking home and learned English in school. English language acquisition is part of being educated in the U.S. and is a critical part of the acculturation process, some of which occurs inevitably as families set up long term residence in the U.S. Tamara recalls the difficulty of acquiring a new language, especially when scoring badly on tests made her question her intelligence and deflated her self-esteem: “I can still remember the vision of being in first grade and sitting at this table and putting my head down and thinking, ‘God, I must be so stupid because I have D’s and F’s.’ I think it was because I didn’t know English. So of course what would I get?” Tamara learned English as her mother reinforced its usage at home.

Tamara was the only female of her generation in her extended family to go to college. Higher education was not expected in her family. In fact, her family lacked the cultural capital to prepare her for college because her parents had less than junior high school educations. Because her parents were unfamiliar with the fact that a large percentage of college students accept scholarships and loans in order to attend colleges and universities, her father felt that this was a strike to their family pride. Tamara explains:

Going to college...wasn’t something that you did. I mean, my dad gave me a really tough time when I went away, because he felt like the fact that I had gotten scholarships that I was getting welfare. And that was a real blow to his being able

⁴¹ For critiques of this conservative approach, see Fischer, Claude S. 1996. *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. and Brown, Michael K. 2003. *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

to provide for his family. Even though my parents were divorced. I mean, my dad wasn't even paying for us anymore. I remember the conversation where, "that's really bad that you're taking...welfare." ...It's like, "Dad, it's not welfare. It's a scholarship because of your grades." ...I didn't talk to my dad for a year because he just felt like I had really blemished the family name by accepting money from these organizations.

Tamara's high school counselor provided her with some of the cultural capital that her natal family could not: "I was incredibly lucky, because I had never thought of going to college and it wasn't a vocabulary that was in our family. It was the high school counselor who called me [and advised me]."

Tamara's peer networks changed dramatically upon matriculation to college. Her family and educational cultures continued to clash once she began college at UC Davis. Once in college, Tamara realized for the first time the racial, economic and cultural disparities between University of California [UC], Davis with its large contingent of "cowboys and rednecks" and her family and community back home. In Santa Barbara, her family was incredibly "tight-knit." They were incessantly attending "weddings, baptisms, and confirmations." In Tamara's words about her youth in Santa Barbara, "In high school...everyone that I hung out with was Mexican. So there wasn't any reason to have any political connections or try to say, 'I am Mexican.' I mean, you just hung out with people. I don't think I ever realized that I was only surrounded by Mexican people." She realized this, however, once she arrived at UC Davis in the mid-1970s and was a numerical minority. As such, she became active in MEChA, only in college needing to assert a Chicana identity because it was threatened by her lack of community:

At UC Davis [there were] the cowboys and the rednecks. And then there's not that many Mexicans. They had a particular view of who you were, what you did.It was really lonely because you would stand out. I think that was the first

place where I ever saw racism. I think one Cinco de Mayo we had some kind of event in the plaza. And we had names scratched on the booth that were just kind of nasty. Like, "Go home, beaners."

Tamara's activism in MEChA and claim to a Chicana identity in college thickens rather than thins her attachment to Mexican culture. This was a very intentional response to a situation where she felt "community" was lacking and racial tensions ran high. She chose to find community through a Chicano student organization rather than a pre-professional organization or sorority chiefly because it was along the racial/ethnic axis of her social identity that she felt marginalized and maligned. Interestingly, she drew attention to her Chicana identity rather than obfuscate it. Considering my entire sample of second generation interviewees, responses to racial slights and exclusions were mixed. Tamara's response represents the substantial portion of interviewees who met racial animosity head-on (for example, some interviewees became active in the Chicano Movement) while others lied to obscure their racial heritage and tried to pass for a white ethnic. This variability of responses to similar circumstances demonstrates that the process of assimilation is not uniform but variable, "bumpy" rather than linear.

Tamara's changed social context in college exposed her to negative stereotypes. Some college peers held inaccurate ideas about Tamara's personality based on her outward performance of self and femininity (her hairstyle and make-up). Tamara recalls her peers' misconceptions of her that led them to maintain a careful distance:

It took a year for people to talk to me. I still remember sitting down in the room and someone saying, "You know, you're a really nice person." And I said, "Why wouldn't I be?" "Well, you know, your hair was ratted. And we thought you had razor blades in your hair or something." ... Here was this person that they had never seen before.... And so the stereotype that they have of me was that I was...prone to being aggressive or violent. It was funny. "You know, you really

are a nice person.” And, “You are ironing your jeans? My God—no one irons their jeans...” And I’m thinking, “Well, everyone I know does!” ...Going to UC Davis, all of a sudden the world doesn’t do this. The world doesn’t wear this kind of clothing. The world doesn’t do their hair that way. Or wear their makeup that way. So that was, again, having to...be aware of how different you were.

Tamara was raised to iron her jeans with a crease down the middle and her peer culture at home endorsed wearing her hair and makeup a certain style. Unbeknownst to her, her appearance was coded as an “insider” when in Santa Barbara and an “outsider” when at Davis. She transposed the codes from one geography and social circle to another, unconscious of their inability to translate, unwittingly introducing herself as marginal to UC Davis’s mainstream student culture.

Tamara not only found herself lacking cultural capital on the social scene at UC Davis, she found that she lacked cultural capital in the classroom as well. While her family provided her many other sources of knowledge, their lack of money and American lifestyle and modes of cultural consumption left a gap in her “cultural toolkit” (Swidler 1986) which only became noticeable upon matriculation to college:

[When] I got to UC Davis, all of a sudden it was like, “wait a minute.” I recognized what an incredibly different background that I had, in terms of not having the availability to some of...some things that at an Anglo family who has money [has access to]—museums, those kinds of things. ...There were certain expectations that when you came into UC Davis you would have certain experience that I didn’t have. So you just had to kind of make up for that. And so I really had to work hard. ...I didn’t have those kinds of tools. I mean exposure to the arts and to different electives. ...That wasn’t something that my family ever talked about...so when you got into a room of kids that were fluent in that, it was hard to participate.

This cultural capital difference was taxing on Tamara as she had to “make up for” that gap by striving to fill it.

In addition to education, religion is an institution that was also powerfully influential in Tamara's racial/ethnic identity development. Tamara was raised Catholic and went to Catholic school for nine years as a child. As an adult, she grew distant from the religion of her youth and is now non-practicing and married to a Jewish man. Nonetheless, upon considering her natal family life she found that her racial heritage and Catholicism were woven together: "I think at the root of all of it [Mexican culture] was the church. A lot of activities revolved around something happening at the church—whether it was the wedding, whether it was the baptism." The church was a centerpiece of her religious, racial/ethnic, and family life. Tamara's commitment to the Catholic Church began to wane when she was twelve years old, when her parents divorced. The Catholic Church prohibited divorce, threatening excommunication, and Tamara's mother took that command seriously and stopped going to church at the time of her divorce. Even with her family, Maria "paid a huge price in terms of being ostracized. Her brothers and sisters wouldn't help her because it wasn't the Catholic thing to do." Maria's excommunication⁴² from the Catholic Church and banishment from her family of origin fueled Tamara's cynicism and eventually toppled her Catholic faith. Tamara traces the major moments of her questioning:

The bible says you can't get divorced. And [my mom] really believed that. ...How can you believe in a religion that thinks you're going to go to hell? There has got to be something wrong with this! ...When my parents got divorced it totally upset the apple cart. ...All of a sudden [my mom] couldn't be Catholic because she was ex-communicated. And she was going to hell. ...My dad went to Jehovah Witness. ...Plus, I always challenged it anyway. So...it was easy to say—"well, there is obviously something wrong with this."

⁴² It was not clear in the interview whether Maria was actually ex-communicated from the church or if she stopped attending of her own accord due to a conflict between her personal life and Catholic doctrine. Regardless, she and her family spoke in terms of ex-communication.

Her parents' divorce marked Tamara's departure from the Catholic Church.

Between Tamara's youthful observations and her mother's more conscious lesson-giving instruction, Tamara has two different models of how a woman can wield power. Along with her own "personally acquired memories" (from first hand experience), Tamara inherited "appropriated memories" from her mother's experience (Mannheim 1936), both of which shaped her racialized and gendered identity. She experienced from her father and a college boyfriend that the *machismo* of some Mexican men impeded her freedom and sense of self. She admits that there was a time when she thought "there would be no way [she] would ever marry someone who wasn't Mexican," that in so doing she "would be a sellout.... And yet here [she's] done that." She struggled with what loyalty to her Mexican heritage meant, especially if that loyalty was contradictory to loyalty to her gender. In many ways, she felt that marrying a non-Mexican man allowed her to escape narrow expectations of her as a woman and a wife. She was engaged to a Mexican national in college and found his understanding of womanhood, manhood, and their potential marital life together to be discordant with hers. With her husband Gregory she sidestepped those racialized understandings of gender: "I didn't feel like I was getting squeezed or being told that I couldn't do this, or expectations of what a Mexican woman was supposed to do. It wasn't there at all." Plus, Gregory being an Anglo "reborn hippie from the '60s" meant that he had already reached liberal thinking that exploded the gender boundaries she found so constricting.

Tamara delves into the rationale for sense of comfort her life with Gregory provides where her gender identity is concerned:

[I was] with someone [Gregory] who didn't...have the same background or the same traditional values. But I didn't see that as a negative. In my family those traditional values I think really held women back. And so Gregory was just this avenue, this vehicle to not have to deal with any of that. And Gregory was really accepting and very loving. And always encouraged. And didn't ever question.... Whereas...[before] I was engaged to someone who was from Mexico...and we were constantly having these discussions about what the roles would be, and how threatened he felt because I was doing certain things. Or what the expectations were. That was a constant dialogue, where it wasn't with Gregory. ...I think on some levels the stereotypes [that] the Catholic Church and Mexican men had...were negative values for me[.] ...It gets back to my mom saying, "You have to learn to take care of yourself." That was such a clear message.

Taking her mother's counsel to heart, Tamara interpreted the refrain "taking care of yourself" to mean out-marriage for her. Guarding the fate of her sense of gendered self carried the cost of some friendships and raised questions of her racial allegiance. For many, exogamy spells a lack of commitment to one's heritage and an inevitable watering-down of cultural traits. Tamara suffered some backlash from her friends on this point: "I think I probably lost some friends who would never have considered marrying an Anglo. Because you kind of sold out because you did. And I did the same thing—if I'd see someone with some Anglo it was, 'Uh-oh, they sold out.' Oh, wait a second, I did too!" Tamara ruptured expectations—both familial and community—by marrying a Jew rather than a Mexican. But she was conscientious about her decision, aware that gaining some distance from Mexican culture did not mean a wholesale rejection of Mexican culture. Instead, she opted to actively pick and choose the elements of her background to retain and to discard. She reasoned that distance from her Mexican culture was not deplorable if it facilitated a healthy sense of gender, feminism, and marriage for her.

A religious conversion from Catholicism to Judaism has also moved Tamara, Gregory, and their three children along the thinned attachment pathway. Tamara and Gregory's son, Andrew, pushed the subject of religious service attendance and desired to

go to Temple. Tamara was uncomfortable with Catholicism because of the church's mandate against divorce and the church members' withdrawal of support of her mother during her divorce. She also felt an ideological incompatibility with Catholicism and therefore supported the family's embrace of Judaism, her husband's religion:

And I wasn't comfortable with Catholicism. ...From going to Catholic school I learned you're going to suffer, and there will be pain, and thank God for that—because you will be rewarded in heaven. And in the Jewish faith—at least from what I've seen—it's your job to make the world a better place and to stand up when there is indifference and to stand up when you see something that's wrong. And that's more my personality than oh, “woe is me...thank God for letting me have pain.”

Even though Catholicism was a big part of how Tamara understood her Mexican identity when she was younger, the constellation of elements that comprise her Mexican identity has changed as time has progressed. In contrast to her youth when being Mexican and Catholic went hand in hand, by age forty-seven, she and her children are Mexican American and Jewish.

Tamara learned lessons not just about race and ethnicity from her mother, but about gender roles as well. Self-reliance, perseverance, and a strong work ethic were key lessons that Maria spoke of trying to instill in her children, and by Tamara's account, she heard that instruction loud and clear:

I think my mom's biggest lesson was just an incredibly strong work ethic. And for her, as a woman, you had to be able to take care of yourself. ...I couldn't count on anyone else but myself to take care of...myself and my family.... A woman had to be able to take care of herself and not depend on a man to do that. And...if you really worked hard you could achieve whatever goal you wanted to.

The life lessons Maria endowed her children were also lessons about gender. Maria was ever mindful of telling her daughter not to be oppressed by male authority. Tamara also

learned some messages about how female power can exist even within male-dominated marriage arrangements. She would be allowed to listen in to her mother's all-female conversations with her aunts:

Whenever you had the parties and all the aunts would congregate and you would be allowed to listen. And it was like I knew that's where the power was. It's like—the husbands would be these peacocks, and they were allowing them to be the peacocks. But they [the women] were the ones that made the decisions. And they couldn't vocalize...their authority. Just because that's the way it was. And yet I knew that's where the power was. I mean, these aunts are the ones that ran the family, they kept it together.

This portrayal of women as behind the scenes with power in the household is a common description of the domestic division of labor in a traditional family arrangement (Beauvoir 1978; Tucker 1978). Even so, Maria conscientiously urges her daughter to be independent.

Like her mother, in selecting Mexican cultural elements to pass onto her children, Tamara became a participant in the thinned attachment process. She filtered out undesirable elements and preserved valuable ones. In so doing she actively enacted “distilled ethnicity.” According to Nazli Kibria (2002: 160), “distilled ethnicity” occurs when “ethnic culture and identity are pared of nonessential components down to their core essence.” Parents teach children only the “basic values” about the family's race/ethnicity. This reflects a high degree of acculturation to middle class America because that is all parents can or want to pass on to their children.

The value of family was passed on intergenerationally as part of this distilled ethnicity. Referring to her natal family, Tamara remarked, “what I learned from being Mexican is just a sense of family. That you're there for your family no matter what.” She

has taught her children this lesson, noting that geographic proximity to her mother (they live twenty minutes away by car) made possible a close relationship between all three generations: “Since they were born the kids have always gone to their Grandma’s house at least once a week. And when they were smaller—three and four times a week. And so they’ve learned that sense of family.” Family events involved getting together for meals: “We used to go to my mom’s twice a week for dinner. And it would be my sisters and my brother, and all of their families, and some of my cousins...and so it would be twenty, twenty-five people every Thursday.” After contemplating what she hopes her children to hold onto she declared family as a “always there, no matter what...[it is a] safety net.” Allowing for sibling differences but hoping for family unity, Tamara pronounced in an imagined conversation with her children: “You might not appreciate each other’s perspective sometimes. But...in the end you are the only ones that will be the co-presidents of your siblings’ fan club!” By focusing on family bonding, Tamara is maintaining one symbolic attachment to her Mexican heritage. However near to universal the tenet of family and family values might be, Tamara endows that value with Mexican meaning. She draws a distinction from her meaning of family and the Anglo norm by saying that she would never push her children out of the house upon adulthood the way her Anglo peers do.⁴³

Each generation confronts different struggles regarding their racial background. Tamara consciously bucked educational and marital expectations, yet she embraced other elements such as “Thursday dinners” with her mother and Mexican food. Tamara recognizes that her half-Mexican, half-Jewish children are presented with a different host

⁴³ Contrary to Tamara’s claim, her son Andrew stated that his parents wished for him to “be happy—and to be out of the house at 18.”

of identity concerns than she herself was. While she and her husband have afforded them a class-privileged lifestyle that includes the expectation of college education, this trend of upward mobility and assimilation has come with the consequence of a racial “identity crisis,” to use their children’s own words. While Jillian can pass as non-Hispanic white, she is often questioned about her background in attempt to place or interpret her, and she alternately feels she belongs to two worlds and doesn’t quite fit either one. Tamara sees the difference between her children’s social and racial positioning and her own. She considers how a third generation Mexican American identity can be confounding:

[Racial/ethnic identity struggles] wasn’t something I ever had to deal with. I was just Mexican and that was it. And they [her children] really struggle with what it means. And as they go through their journeys they’ll decide how important it is and where they want to be. I’m hoping that they embrace both and that they realize they have an incredible history.

Tamara spoke of Andrew as “embracing both” the Jewish and Mexican cultures. Tamara explained that Andrew was the one member in the family who pushed them to reconnect with their Jewish faith. Immediately after that assertion she also claimed, “Andrew loves being Mexican. He has all kinds of blankets and little tchatchkes that he keeps because that’s who he is.” Unintentionally illustrating the cultural mix in her home, Tamara uses the Yiddish colloquialism “tchatchke” to refer to her son’s Mexican trinkets.

Third Generation: Jillian Rosenberg

Jillian, a twenty-year-old student at Yale University, is the eldest daughter of the Rosenberg family.⁴⁴ She is Mexican (from her mother’s side) and Jewish (from her

⁴⁴ Jillian has two younger siblings. I interviewed her and her younger brother, Andrew, who is seventeen and attends a local high school in Santa Barbara. The youngest sibling of the Rosenberg family (age

father's side). Jillian has medium-brown hair, light skin, and dark hazel eyes with a bit of an almond shape and flash to them. She is short and petite, with rounded hips. She says people will variously think she's "all Mexican, all White, or something else." Some people approach her speaking Spanish while others are shocked when she reveals she is part Mexican.

By measures of structural and behavioral assimilation, Jillian is indeed assimilated into the U.S. mainstream. Several factors contributed to her assimilation: her parents' upward economic mobility and firmly middle class standing, her educational achievement and trajectory, her English language fluency (and loss of Spanish fluency), and her adoption of middle class values (work ethic, career aspirations) as well as the bi-cultural norms practiced by her family. In grammar school, Jillian rejected her Mexican heritage, even typecasting other Mexicans (often lower class Mexicans) based on mainstream negative stereotypes. She reasoned that her allegiance to Whiteness was in part because, as the "norm," she found it "unproblematic." Her Jewish ancestry is the "taken-for-granted" or "background" or "norm" of her identity, as well as the invisible benchmark for society. Jillian's tacit rationale for obscuring her Mexican identity and highlighting her White identity likely involves being able to garner certain benefits of White privilege, such as uncontested enrollment in GATE classes in high school that were racially segregated. She observes, "Maybe growing up I was trying to navigate between two worlds but more trying to keep myself out of one of them as much as possible. It's gotten more complicated in college."

thirteen) was too young to participate in the research study, given the parameters I had set at the beginning of the project. I will concentrate on Jillian in this chapter and will discuss Andrew in further detail in Chapter Six.

Jillian expresses a “thinned attachment” because she is removed from Mexico by three generations, was raised in a bi-cultural home with an assimilationist orientation, is embedded in American institutions, and is not Catholic. Furthermore, she has a mostly white peer group, is a monolingual English speaker (she is barely conversational in Spanish), and she has a light complexion (others often categorize her as “white”). She displays a “thinned attachment” to her Mexican heritage in that she is aware of her cultural background yet not reliant on it. She experienced her mixed heritage as alternately a source of flexibility as well a wellspring of “identity crises.” In fact, she is most consumed with her Mexican identity when it becomes problematic for her.

I argue that Jillian’s experience of thinned attachment at the third generation is due to both familial and institutional forces. Due to her family structure and orientation, class privilege, educational segregation, the experience of her mother and grandmother, her gender, and college experience, she is living out a race-sensitive but not Mexican-centric family and social life. First, Jillian’s natal family is comprised of her Mexican American mother and Jewish-American father. Their bi-cultural household and her mother’s exogamy—as well as her grandmother’s admonitions against marrying a Mexican man—have conditioned Jillian with a largely assimilationist mindset. Furthermore, her family’s economic upward mobility has had the consequence of moving into a White-dominant neighborhood and a majority White peer group at school.

In a social and educational context of Whiteness, Jillian “naturally” assumed that she was White. Jillian explained the logic by which she deduced she was White in elementary school:

In all of the GATE [Gifted and Talented Education] classes, everyone was white. There is a really clear-cut distinction between the white people and the Mexican

people. If you are a Mexican kid, you were in ESL [English as a Second Language] classes or not very intelligent.... It was like, “are you Mexican or are you white?” I look a lot more White than I look Mexican...and I was in the GATE classes with all the White kids, so I was White.

Complaining about the “unbelievably distinct boundary between white and Mexican kids,” Jillian found no room for her mixed race heritage. Due to her school achievement, tracking placement, class privilege, and peer group, she identified as White. Circulating in predominantly middle class White circles, Jillian was exposed to and adopted some stereotypes of Mexicans. Identifying as White in elementary school, it is unclear whether Jillian did not perceive these stereotypes of Mexicans as encompassing her or whether she *did* make that connection and therefore opted to draw closer to Whiteness. For instance, Jillian reflected, “I had really awful stereotypes of what Mexican people were like too, like all Mexican people are gardeners and maids.” She laughed uncomfortably as she admitted, “[there was always] the half of me that I had to hide. I was always so embarrassed of that; I was soiled in some way because I had Mexican blood in me.”

The low social value that society places on Latinos also influenced Jillian’s drawing away from her Mexican heritage. Food, as a cultural signal of her ethnicity, came to symbolize shame and substandard performance for her. In answer to my question about when she first understood the concept of race or ethnicity, she described a situation when she was eight or nine years old:

I played piano for my whole life. We used to have performances and competitions. For one of them you had to memorize five to ten pieces and you’d play them in front of a judge and...you’d get a scorecard back. ...I was performing my pieces in front of a judge and I just really freaked out and messed up all of my songs and got really off track. The guy was trying to calm me down and talk to me and he said, “did you have anything to eat today for lunch?” I was like yeah, “yeah, I did.” He said, “well, what did you eat?” I had had a burrito.

(laughs) And for some reason I was deathly ashamed to say that. But I couldn't think of anything else to say, so I was like, 'I had a burrito' (meek, quiet). "A burrito?" (curious, surprised) I'm sure he wasn't even talking about race or anything, but for some reason that really stuck in my head. "Oh my God, what if he thinks I'm a gross little Mexican kid who can't get her songs right?" ...I was really embarrassed about being Mexican at that time and I felt there was a big distinction between me and him, this white guy. I was so ashamed of my little burrito.

Despite being so young, Jillian understood that Mexicans and their customary burritos carried social signals with which she did not want to be associated. During this time in elementary school she was in GATE classes with White peers and she felt pressure (and perhaps desire) to be White. She was struggling with social and institutional messages about the extant racial and ethnic hierarchy. Because classes were segregated by race (she reported she was one of five Mexicans in all of the GATE classes), in order to remain in her GATE class without being suspect, she felt pressure to deny her Mexican heritage in favor of her white ancestry. In these years she was struggling with free-floating anxiety about how to reconcile two distinct ethnic backgrounds into one complete identity. It is significant that the piano judge who tried to come to her aid and inadvertently set off her insecurities was a white man. Jillian intuitively understood that this was symbolic of her place, and his, in the U.S. power structure in terms of sex and race privilege. By admitting that her lunch was inconsistent with mainstream food culture she increased her social distance from whiteness and amplified her cultural frustrations. Food can flag ethnic difference. Just as it can fortify ethnic identity and rejuvenate family bonds, so too can it draw boundaries between mainstream and periphery.

In her youth, Jillian distanced herself from her Mexican background due to multiple forces: educational segregation (to be in GATE she must be White), society's low estimation of the Mexican population (making her burrito shameful and her

Whiteness unproblematic), her grandmother's and mother's oppression within patriarchy and Catholicism, and a racially-politicized college experience which uncomfortably highlighted her mixed heritage. Jillian experienced her whiteness as unproblematic because it is accepted as the norm in U.S. society. Indeed, Ruth Frankenberg defines whiteness a location of structural advantage (racial privilege) within a social hierarchy and a set of cultural practices that are typically unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg 1993: 1). While whiteness usually constitutes an invisible norm, it is in fact a salient organizing characteristic of white people's lives.⁴⁵ Given the benefit of racial privilege, those of mixed heritage may be tempted to side with their whiteness because, as Jillian said, it is "unproblematic." Furthermore, there is external pressure for one's attitudes, behavior, and racial identification to match one's physical appearance and name. As Julie Bettie found in her work with Mexican American and White high school girls in California, "one's race performance was *expected* to correspond to a perceived racial 'essence,' marked by color and surname" (Bettie 2003: 85). For light-skinned, brown haired Jillian Rosenberg, this conceptualization of race performance expects her to "pass" for non-Hispanic White (Jewish).

Because of Jillian's "wanting to pass for White" in grade school and being perceived as such because of her physical looks and other signals such as class status, demeanor, and educational attainment, it is no wonder that she feels she is "part of dominant or mainstream U.S. culture." As corroborating testimony, note that she does not feel like she has encountered discrimination. A sign of her assimilation, she "thinks

⁴⁵ For example, note Ian Haney-Lopez's scholarship on how state and federal courts ruled in immigration cases in order to simultaneously restrict U.S. citizenship to Whites (in 1790, Congress put forth a racial prerequisite to citizenship that restricted naturalization to "white persons"), as well as define the category of Whiteness (Haney-Lopez 1996).

she passes for being white pretty well” and therefore avoided the blunt end of discrimination. Yet, even her “passing” is inconsistent because while she feels “hyper sensitive to [race], like [she] expect[s] to be discriminated against.”

Familiar with her family history, Jillian was aware that the Mexican traditions of patriarchy and strict Catholicism did not serve her grandmother and mother well. The two women above Jillian in the family line experienced gender oppression as a result of their cultural and religious ties. Therefore, they raised Jillian with far looser cultural and religious bonds, resulting in her thinned attachment to Mexican culture and her stern opinion that she would not marry a Mexican man nor practice Catholicism.⁴⁶ Recall Maria’s divorce from her physically and verbally abusive alcoholic husband and Tamara’s need to escape patriarchal expectations of gender by marrying a Jew and attending college. Jillian recalled family stories about her grandmother’s life:

She was the first person in her entire family to get a divorce and her entire family did not speak to her...some for six years, some for ten years. No one would go near her. She didn’t have any help. She was raising three kids on her own. Even the neighborhood she lives in...rumors were spread about her.... People would be telling [my mom] to her face that they were all going to hell [because her] mom got divorced. It must have taken so much strength to be able to do that—she is a really, really religious person, very Catholic.

Because cultural and religious expectations were contrary to her internal compass of self-preservation and livelihood, Maria rejected her culture and religion and divorced her husband. Witnessing this and being taught by her mother to be self-sufficient, Tamara increased the cultural distance between herself and her Mexican roots. Raising her daughter with that same philosophy, Tamara reared Jillian without sentimental

⁴⁶ Unlike her younger siblings, she does not practice her father’s religion (Judaism) although that religion is the most appealing to her.

attachments and with some negative associations to the culture and religion that was a disservice to her and her mother's sense of gender identity and livelihood.

Jillian's first-hand experiences only strengthened the thinned attachment to Mexican culture with which she was reared. Jillian's insider knowledge regarding the gender restrictions that Mexican culture tries to wield over women vis-à-vis power dynamics in marriages, circumscribed educational opportunities, and a gendered division of labor pushed her even further from Mexican traditionalism. Noting that both her grandmother and mother are somewhat "black sheep" in their own natal families because of behavior that defied gender norms (divorce and out-marriage), Jillian described her traditional Mexican kin:

I think, actually, that a lot of the misconceptions I grew up having about Mexicans were from [my family] because they are a very, very traditional family. My mother would kill me if she heard me say this. The women stay around and cook and have no jobs and the men go out and come back and kick their feet up and demand beer and food. No one goes to college and you should be married and having kids at my age (authoritative tone). It's really, really, really traditional.

She described her family's reaction to her mother refusing to abide by gender expectations of marrying a Mexican and remaining in the domestic sphere:

No one would ever say outright, "I can't believe you married a white guy" [and yet] I always felt like we were the black sheep of the family and it was some sort of disgrace that my mom married a White guy. My mom has always been the black sheep because she went to college, too. She actually had goals and did something. They always felt like, "What is this woman doing, running wild and going off to college and trying to do something with her life?"

Seeing both strict gender expectations and her mother's defiance of them, Jillian continued along the pathway paved by her second wave feminism mother. She feared being "pigeon-holed" into a role that she didn't want:

The subservient wife. You pop out the kids and you make dinner and keep the house clean and keep him happy. [One side of my family]...is very, very, very traditional and I always felt like I didn't get any respect. Even when I was a senior in high school and I was going off to an Ivy League school and I had done really well for myself and I had a lot of accomplishments...I felt like I was never going to get any respect from them. Like I was betraying my culture by trying to go off to college and do something with that.

A much-disputed research finding suggests that for some minorities educational success equates to “acting white” (Matute-Bianchi 1986; Ogbu and Fordham 1986) and betraying one's cultural background. Feeling this pressure, Jillian struggles with commitment to her goals that are supported by her immediate family and the traditional race and gender roles that her wider kinship circle expects of her. In order to be liberated from gender constraints, Jillian distanced herself further from the tight gender roles of her extended Mexican family.

Jillian's pathway of thinned attachment continued upon matriculation to college and moving out of her family's sphere of influence. At Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, amidst a racially heterogeneous population, Jillian was both pushed and pulled when it came to being Mexican American. First, her college attendance was in part a function of her middle class status and her family's acculturation,⁴⁷ or adoption of middle class norms and values. A mark of structural assimilation (Gordon 1964),⁴⁸ Jillian's Ivy League college education signals her membership in mainstream U.S. society. Indeed, her Yale University education is in many ways a perfection of an ideal considering the premium most middle class whites place on an Ivy League education. This isn't simply going to college, this is attending an *elite* institution.

⁴⁷ According to Milton Gordon, acculturation includes changing cultural patterns to those of host society (also called cultural or behavioral assimilation).

⁴⁸ According to Milton Gordon, structural assimilation includes “large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society” (71).

Jillian's college experience included racialized encounters. These situations belie her smooth and wholesale acceptance into an elite historically White university. While Jillian was made aware of her racial background in college in a new way and took on a "Mexican American" label more willingly because of her new "politically correct" college atmosphere, she did not actually renew any substantive connection to it. While her Mexican heritage was "symbolic" to the extent that it did not overly determine her life outcomes, it was not symbolic in the pleasurable and voluntary way that Gans (1979) predicted. For Jillian, being of Mexican descent was an integral feature of her life because she struggled on a regular basis with the question of what being half-Mexican and half-White meant. These questions were persistent because they not only arose from her internally but they were consistently asked of her from outside sources as well.

At Yale, Jillian continued her thinned attachment to her Mexican heritage. While college campus student groups aimed at minorities often aspire to build intra-racial bonds and foster solidarity, Jillian found them distasteful because of their strident political activism. While she sympathized with the aims of campus diversity and affirmative action, she complained about feeling "fragmented" when she was invited to a special orientation for minority students at the beginning of her first year in college:

[Yale has] an orientation program for all students and then they have a special orientation for minority students. I remember getting the invitation saying, 'we have you down saying you are Mexican,' would you like to come attend this event? Why is only half of me allowed to go to this? Why do I have to be fragmented like that? I didn't go because I was like...if you really want to make any sort of significant change in the way race relations are played out, you have to educate everyone and get everyone involved. We can't just sit around saying, 'oh, I feel so oppressed' and 'oh, I feel so discriminated against.'

Jillian proposed opening the minority student orientation to the entire student body:

Educate people and work with White people instead of fearing them or acting like they're a problem. [The university was] going to invite everyone to this now and people were just outraged, "I can't sit around and have honest conversations about my race with White people there." "Why not?" It's not like White people are like the Devil or going to mock you or have some sort of negative presence there. Educate them. If they don't understand, tell them.

Jillian struggles for equilibrium between the two sides of herself, as well as wanting to see greater racial equality in society at large. Knowing that she pays more attention to her Mexican background because it doesn't fit the norm of Whiteness, she also recognizes that Whiteness is not a vacant identity.

Recall that Jillian comfortably saw herself as White through most of her growing up years, albeit this perception was periodically troubled. In college, social context further complicated her story of racialization, because Jillian consented (to a limited degree) to have her Mexicanness exoticized on a predominantly White, Ivy League campus. Due to a confluence of factors (for example, having checked "Mexican American" on her college application, residing on a politically aware college campus that values "diversity," and renewed connection to Mexico due to recent family travels), Jillian began to accept "Mexican" as a descriptor. Her move toward "Mexican" was only partly voluntary, however:

I think I started saying Mexican since I'd gone to Yale, because now it's like "cool" to be Mexican. (wry tone) It definitely is weird. I feel weird that I don't have nearly as many issues with being White and Jewish as I do with being Mexican. I think I probably use Mexican and Mexican American.... As much as I say that being White is an identity, it does feel like more of a vacancy. There is really not anything to explain there. With Mexican it's like, "it's this and this and this." There is not really anything to confront with being a white person.

JMV: Even though your whiteness hails from your Jewish culture which is a white minority?

Jillian: I haven't really associated with Jewishness too much. My brother and sister both have.

Whiteness, for Jillian, is easier to identify with because it is “unproblematic”: as the majority race in the U.S. there is nothing to explain or defend. In fact, Jillian reveals her tendency to view herself as part of White-dominated mainstream culture when she reported that her current boyfriend—a white Catholic at Yale—remarked that they were in an “inter-racial relationship.” She agreed, though had never thought of their relationship in those racial terms before (recall that she is also half White, reducing the racial gap even further). Yet, she agreed to her boyfriend’s declaration, thus asserting her difference from him and white culture. This “flexible ethnicity” or ability to traverse multiple ethnic and racial landscapes typifies not only her experience but also that of the vast majority of the third generation, as will be explored in Chapter Six.

Having a “flexible ethnicity,” Jillian is steeped in two cultures, not just one. She is assimilated into the middle class American mainstream: she comes from a middle class home, she is on her way to a college degree from an elite institution, she is fluent in English but not in Spanish, and her culture is rooted in the U.S. rather than Mexico. With regard to Spanish, which is often used as a marker of cultural maintenance (by scholars and laypersons alike), Jillian remarked: “I have a good vocabulary but bad grammar; I don’t know how to put a sentence together. It’s really important. I’m really upset...it was my first language and I just kind of lost it. I’m trying to take it at school, but I have two majors and I’m pre-med. It’s really important, but I haven’t been able to make time to actually do it.” Jillian lost Spanish at a young age and has never recaptured it because

her home life did not reinforce it and her school life is overwhelmed with English and other academic concerns.

If Jillian is assimilated, how does she live out her Mexican culture? She experiences a “thinned attachment” to Mexican culture. She is both symbolically and practically attached to Mexican traditions and knowledge, but tenuously and loosely so. Never pointing to any Mexican traditions as strongholds in her life, she experiences her Mexican identity primarily due to her commitment to her family. When I asked what she likes about being of Mexican descent she responded:

I think the most important thing to me is the importance of family. That is just so, so, so important to me. I’m really glad to be a part of a culture that appreciates that. I think it’s the culture that is most focused on the family. It’s just really important to me. My mom chose to live here [in Santa Barbara] because she wanted to be near her mom and I want to live here as well and let my kids have the same kind of relationship that I got to have with my grandma.... And I’ve never met anyone else who has felt that same way; everyone else is like, “oh, God, I want to get as far away from my parents as I can.” ...I’ve just been raised and learned that your family is there for you no matter what, you can’t escape them, you are related by blood, and they are there for you and that’s that.... I really love everyone being together and getting to share moments together.

Aside from Jillian’s commitment to her family—which she and her mother both attribute to Mexican culture but may be valorized across many ethnic cultures—she is only loosely connected to her maternal grandmother’s homeland. Jillian’s “thinned attachment” is demonstrated by the many ways that she is distant from Mexican ways and belief systems and even actively moving away from them. Specifically, she is opposed to patriarchal family forms and displays of excessive masculinity (*machismo*), is not Catholic, and does not think she will marry a Mexican American. She reflected on the aspects of Mexican culture that she does not like:

The traditional family structure. Odd that the thing that I like the most is also the thing that I dislike the most. I don't like the traditional "man goes out and works and the wife stays home and cooks and doesn't really do anything." I really don't like that. I (also) really don't like a lot of the really strict Catholicism.⁴⁹

Recalling that her mother avoided what she saw as pitfalls of a traditional culture that violated her gender equality ideals by marrying a non-Mexican, Jillian is also headed in that direction. When I inquired as to her ideas on marriage, she replied with certainty, taking her grandmother's woman-to-woman advice to heart:

I am like 99% sure that I won't marry another Mexican. Which makes me really sad because my kids will be only one-fourth. But my grandma—she's like, "*Mija [darling]*, never date a Mexican man. They are nothing but trouble. Stay away from the Mexican men."

JMV: Why do you think she says that?

Jillian: I think that she just thinks that she has a very traditional view of them as well and doesn't want me to be in that role, a subservient role, and doesn't want me to fall into the traditional structure like that.

Jillian holds strong personal convictions that she sees as largely incompatible with Mexican manhood. Furthermore, she notes that most Mexican men she encounters are not "marriageable" in her sense of the term. That is, they have not been on the assimilationist and upward mobility trajectory that she has. In a prospective marriage partner, matching education, family structures, and belief systems are of utmost importance to her. In this equation, while she bemoans the potential loss of Mexican

⁴⁹ While Jillian has a distaste for Catholicism, she thinks that it is synonymous with Mexican culture. Upon mentioning her White Catholic boyfriend, she recalled the moment she was forced to disentangle race from religion: "Crazy enough, I'm actually dating someone a white guy who is a Catholic. It was so funny because I found out he was Catholic and I was like, 'I didn't know that Whites were Catholic! I thought it was just Mexicans.' Everyone was like, 'Are you serious? Where have you been growing up?'" From this vantage point, Jillian's move away from Catholicism is yet another way in which she is moving away from traditional Mexican culture.

culture through inter-marriage, it is Mexican culture that will likely lose out and not be retained:

I suppose if I found one that I felt melded well in other aspects that race definitely wouldn't be an issue. But what are the chances of me meeting a Mexican man who doesn't want a traditional family structure and who is well educated and kind of has my similar beliefs and my similar values and someone that I'm attracted to on top of that? What are my chances of that? It's probably a really cynical view to have, but if I'm honest with myself, that's really how I feel. ...I wouldn't have a problem marrying any other race or anything like that, but just because all of my serious relationships have been with white guys, I just feel like that's where it's going to end up. And it does make me a little bit sad because I want my kids to be able to share that kind of culture and history that I do. It does make me sad that they would only be one-quarter, but maybe that just means that I have to make a better job of filling that culture in them.

Jillian romanticizes some aspects of Mexican culture (such as family togetherness) while disparaging others (patriarchy and traditional gender roles). She makes life choices that avoid what she sees as the downsides of her Mexican heritage. By resisting patriarchal family forms, rejecting Catholicism, and dating non-Mexican men, she is on a trajectory that will further assimilate herself and her potential offspring, the fourth generation. Recognizing that her "thinned attachment" will likely result in exogamy and that a consequence will be her future children's even further distance (generationally and culturally) from Mexico, Jillian is disheartened and vows to rejuvenate Mexican culture for her children. However, the likelihood of this occurring in any meaningful way is dubious. Without the support of a partner who can contribute knowledge and emotional support to Jillian's aims, Jillian's children are in all probability going to continue the assimilationist and thinned attachment course that her mother and she and her siblings have charted.

Even while Jillian suspects that her children will be bicultural as well, her own bicultural identity has been problematic for her, producing “identity crises” at various times in her life. She has struggled with how to cohere her “fragmented” identity. Her racial identity—and the crises that ensue—has been dependent on context. She has experienced two extremes in terms of her Mexican identity: it was “dirty” and something to actively estrange herself from when she was younger and in college it is exoticized by her East Coast college peers as “not just White.” Because whiteness is often the “unmarked and unnamed” standard (Frankenberg 1993) and is a trait shared by the majority of the U.S. populace, Jillian’s Mexican side provides her a noticeable racial identity:

I’ve had identity because of my Mexicanness. White is the norm. Anything you add on top of that is going to cause problems or issues. My dad [Jewish] has a lot of history with his family, with the Holocaust, and so there is definitely that history, but I almost don’t associate that with White history. It feels like there is no “White history.” There is the history of our country and all that, but it doesn’t feel like there is as much history there as with other cultures. Odd.... I guess it is because it’s such an odd conglomeration of everything. Mexicans are from Mexico. Whites are from *everywhere*. Maybe it’s because growing up, it was OK that I was White. I never had any issues with that. I never felt like I had to hide it or be really proud of it. I don’t feel like it has as much attached to it, which is sad because I don’t want to feel like half of me is really significant and has all these issues to work out and the other half of me....

For Jillian, her Whiteness is an easily acceptable identity feature because it is the national norm. Mexican identity, however, provides distinction (positively and negatively, depending on social context) and therefore “causes issues” for her. She continues to struggle with how to combine two seemingly disparate racial heritages. Furthermore, she hopes that her future children will have an easier time coalescing their identity features than she has (which they probably will if she marries a White man as this will strengthen

their connection to Whiteness even more). She muses on what she would share with her children about her background:

I would definitely want to share with them how difficult it's been trying to come to terms with everything. I'd want them to have a sense of their Mexican heritage...and the big emphasis on family. I don't want them to feel that they are divided. I want them to know that whatever percentage White they are that that is still an identity too. I'd want them to be as comfortable as I can possibly make them with who they are and try and help so that they don't have to be so fragmented, so it can be that they are whole people. Everyone is 25% Mexican and 25% whatever and 50% White and all of that.

Hoping to ease the identity struggles for her children includes not only helping them sort out their own backgrounds but also entails emphasizing that *everyone* is a racial composite—even Whiteness is not a vacant identity but hails from multiple cultural combinations. As much as Jillian, and other third generation Mexican Americans, may want to preserve their cultural heritage, this may not be possible without sustained and conscientious striving. After declaring that she wants to “preserve all of it,” Jillian conceded, “I feel like it's slipping through our fingers.” The pull of her assimilationist, upwardly mobile, and thinned attachment reality seems inconsistent with her preservationist sentiments.

Discussion

In this discussion section I refer to the subset of my sample traveling a thinned attachment trajectory, rather than focus exclusively on the family highlighted above. Several mechanisms contribute to the thinned attachment incorporation trajectory. Several choices, both deliberate and unintentional, spanning the personal, social and institutional contexts facilitate thinned attachment. A survival mode of parenting where

parents focus on providing the basics for children and lack time to supplement their children's knowledge of family history is one way attachment to Mexican culture weakens. Parents not teaching children Spanish (or of the lack of enforcement for maintaining Spanish in the home) have a direct and profound effect on with whom Mexican American children can communicate and what kinds of cultural knowledge they can obtain. Many families expressed a *desire* to continue the use of Spanish in the family but they either lacked the vigilance to implement that commitment or could not counteract the centrifugal force of English that surrounded them in public spaces and institutions.

Changing gender dynamics and gender roles also contribute to thinning. Here again, the influence of changing gender roles can operate at both unconscious and conscious levels. By moving from a more traditional and patriarchal system in Mexico into a more transitional/egalitarian system in the U.S., a thinning of Mexican ways of life is a byproduct of conforming to new structural surroundings. Structure can condition cultural shifts, such as a move toward thinned attachment. Moreover, some Mexican Americans (namely women in all three generations and some men in the third generation) make purposeful decisions to adopt the ideology and practices of gender equality. This decision distances them from Mexican gender ideals and modes of operation even more.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Certainly, gender plays a significant role in the racial identity development and cultural attachments or aversions in the three generations of females in the Montes/Rosenberg family depicted here. Jillian's brother, Andrew, was desired to change the traditional gender ideologies that oppressed the female members of his extended family. Nonetheless, as a male, he held a less oppositional stance toward being half-Mexican than his sister. This suggests that gender is very much inextricably bound to racial experiences, as scholars have long pointed out Bettie, Julie. 2003. *Women without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Collins, Patricia Hill. 1991. *Black Feminist Thought*, vol. 2. New York: Routledge, King, Deborah. 1988. "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14:42-72, Segura, Denise. 1995. "Day work in the suburbs: the

Diminishing devotion to Catholicism also contributed to cultural dilution. The vast majority of Mexicans (both in Mexico and the U.S.) are Catholic and in many families' narratives Mexican culture was very much intertwined with Catholic religious traditions. The families that remained practicing Catholics usually retained a strong sense of Mexican identity whereas those families who converted to other faiths (Jehovah's Witness, 7th Day Adventist, Judaism) did not. Mexican culture and Catholicism have a mutually reinforcing relationship; it appears that when one weakens, so does the other.

Improved economic status occurred for the vast majority of my sample—both thinned attachment and cultural maintenance families—and so this factor does not determine one outcome over another. Those thinned attachment families who were upwardly mobile oftentimes moved into higher socioeconomic status neighborhoods or geographic regions that were predominantly non-Hispanic white. These families became more enmeshed with middle class, mainstream American culture, losing daily contact with coethnics and thus forfeited a source of cultural reinforcement. This could be conscious or unconscious thinning. Yet, ~~not all upwardly mobile families~~ experienced thinned attachment; some remained very culturally attuned and committed.

Educational attainment is heavily influenced by generation (and class). All first generation immigrants had “junior high or less” levels of education whereas their children's modal educational attainment was college degree.⁵¹ The third generation is well on its way to a college degree being the minimum educational attainment, with a sizeable portion of individuals seeking post-graduate degrees.

work experience of Chicana private housekeepers." in *Latina issues: fragments of historia (ella) (herstory)*, edited by A. S. López. New York: Garland Publishing..

⁵¹ The range was from “junior high or less” to “doctoral degree.”

While educational attainment is not crucial to one's racial self-concept or incorporation pattern, the social context of school is important. Both the racial demographics of the school campus and its racial atmosphere play an important role in racial identity development. How people calibrate their responses to racialized educational settings steers their racial identity development. For instance, Mexican American respondents who attended a school with a sizeable portion of other Mexican Americans, felt supported by their surroundings and social networks. As a consequence, this social environment allowed them to hold onto and practice their cultural heritage. On the other hand, if they attended a school where they were a minority population and they encountered unwelcoming or questioning peers as well as institutional indifference, they were more likely to either resist schooling and/or take a thinned attachment approach as a means of self-defense.

Exogamy is another pivotal factor in thinned attachment.⁵² Intermarriage is commonly viewed as an indicator of assimilation (Gordon 1964; Kalmijn 1998; Lee and Bean 2004; Murguia 1982). But intermarriage also has decisive consequences for the racial, social, and cultural position of the offspring of such pairings. Therefore I interpret exogamy as both an indicator of and factor leading toward assimilation. Those who intermarry with European-descent Americans in the second generation⁵³ have a far greater propensity to adopt American traditions and outlooks and loosen the grip on Mexican ones. Exogamous marital choices can either be interpreted as moving with the tide of structural assimilation or an overt choice (as in cases where a Mexican American woman wants to escape rigid gender roles). A Mexican American's out-marriage with a

⁵² See Appendix E.

⁵³ All first generation immigrants married Mexican nationals or, in one case, a Mexican American.

European-descent American further reinforces American culture within the family unit. Alternatively, Mexican American intramarriage supports a family atmosphere that includes some Mexican orientations such as Spanish, food, tradition, and values. Marriage is thus a heavily influential, if not decisive, ingredient in the cultural recipes for either thinned attachment or cultural maintenance.

How likely someone is to loosen their sense of Mexican identity is also influenced by personal features that make that identity more evident to outsiders, such as skin tone and surname. Physically, thinned attachment families, especially by the third generation, are lighter in skin tone than cultural maintenance families. Phenotype changes in the third generation are part due to intermarriage in the second generation. Skin tone and surname affect how people are perceived and treated by others as well as how they self-identify. While the preponderance of my sample had Hispanic last names, those who did not were invariably in the thinned attachment category. As a result of phenotype and surname, this population is more accepted by dominant society and therefore has an easier time acculturating (and, conversely, has a harder time preserving ethnic culture).

It is due to structural and cultural influences as well as the choices of everyday life that one develops a thinned attachment to a natal culture. Deliberate choices can enact a thinned attachment—and for reasons that do not necessarily signify a desire for cultural distance per se. The structural and cultural conditions of American life can sway immigrant families toward cultural assimilation as well. Recall that a sizeable portion of my sample represent the other possible incorporation outcome of cultural maintenance, so I am by no means suggesting that American culture will immediately and irresistibly overwhelm immigrants and overtake their native cultural traits. Indeed, while

assimilation models often assume that upward mobility is achieved at the expense of shedding non-U.S. traditions and cultures, Min Zhou and Carl Bankston (1998) demonstrated in the case of the Vietnamese that upward mobility can occur not by distancing one's self from a native culture but by adhering to the values of that culture and preserving a high degree of ethnic involvement (Zhou and Bankston 1998). Zhou and Bankston's scholarship thus illustrates an exception to the assumption that assimilation requires immigrants to jettison their homeland's culture and value system in order to achieve academic success and socioeconomic upward mobility.

The portrait sketched here is in the spirit of a Weberian "ideal type" (Weber 1978). I have described how thinned attachment families appear in aggregate, using the Montes/Rosenberg family as a rich illustration. For each family characteristic that contributes to thinned attachment described above, there is a range of possibilities that can combine to yield a similar result but due to a different constellation of factors.⁵⁴ Furthermore, thinned attachment and cultural maintenance represent two poles on a spectrum of incorporation possibilities. Families may not neatly fit these two categories but instead lie somewhere along the continuum that exists between thinned attachment and cultural maintenance.

The next chapter will explore the second of the two main paradigms of incorporation and racial identity development that I present. Moving on to families that display "cultural maintenance" through three generations, I will show how some of the same factors highlighted here, with different content and different combinations, can

⁵⁴ For these concepts of "causal complexity" and "configurations of causes" I owe gratitude to Charles Ragin's writings on Boolean analysis. See Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, —. 1994. *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.

produce a qualitatively different outcome. Taking this chapter and the next as two sides of the same coin, we can see how a diversity of identities and outcomes can be exhibited by three-generation Mexican American immigrant families that we might consider one homogenous group if we stopped at first glance.

Conclusion

The concept of thinned attachment refines assimilation theory. Straight-line assimilation theory is overly deterministic, assuming that incorporation requires total shedding of native culture. Thinned attachment allows for “distilled” cultural elements to be passed on, even while assimilation occurs at other levels. Thinned attachment, coupled with cultural maintenance discussed in the next chapter, is an important addition to sociological understanding of immigration, assimilation, race, and identity. These concepts include an understanding of intergenerational transmission of culture that occur within familial, institutional, and historical frameworks. By complementing and complicating assimilation theory with an intergenerational analysis, one can pinpoint both individual choices and structural factors which motor the assimilation process.

The contribution of this chapter is the concept of thinned attachment. This novel concept elaborates assimilation theory by examining the mechanisms that propel the acculturation process. This notion adds nuance to our current understanding of incorporation patterns and racial identity formation over generations. Thinned attachment results from a complex negotiation within the individual that includes both personal and institutional factors. Racial/ethnic self-concept and degree of attachment to a land of origin is highly contingent on generation, family orientation, social context, historical era, and personal desires.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

“Our lives represent, in C. Wright Mills’ (1959) phrase,
the “intersection of biography and history.”

While we may be only dimly aware of
the historical currents that are shaping our lives,
we can rest assured they are.”

(McAdam 1988: 11; Mills 1959)

“Racialization is an ideological process,
an historically specific one.”

(Omi and Winant 1994: 64)

To complement the last chapter on “thinned attachment,” this chapter presents an alternative model of assimilation into U.S. society that I call “cultural maintenance.” In contradistinction to the thinned attachment families, the cultural maintenance families have preserved many elements of Mexican culture while still making swift adjustments to U.S. culture. While families in both models have assimilated in terms of structure (mainstream schools and occupations), economics, and civic participation, they vary in their levels of adoption of U.S. culture and continued adherence to Mexican culture. This chapter argues that the same factors that influence a thinned attachment outcome—namely marriage, gender ideologies, and religion—when configured differently, can produce a cultural maintenance outcome. The “cultural maintenance” trajectory of assimilation occurs when racial/ethnic in-marriage, Catholicism, and traditional (or transitional) gender ideologies persist in the second generation. Cultural maintenance helps us rethink assimilation theory by adding an understanding of how retaining cultural values from a

sending country can help rather than hinder acclimation to and success in a new national environment.⁵⁵

While socioeconomic status does not noticeably vary between the two groups, the thinned attachment and cultural maintenance models diverge in several ways (see Figure 1). Marriage (endogamy versus exogamy) at the second generation is a primary influence of branching toward cultural maintenance or thinned attachment. Cultural maintenance families have far higher intra-marriage rates, more traditional gender ideologies, higher rates of participation in Civil Rights activism, and are more often practicing Catholics than their thinned attachment counterparts. Family memory and personal traits also vary: cultural maintenance families display strong adherence to family history, are more often Spanish-surnamed, and possess darker skin tones and non-European features than do thinned attachment families.

Table 3.1: Points of Divergence

	Thinned Attachment	Cultural Maintenance
Marriage	Exogamous	Endogamous
Gender Ideologies	Transitional/ Egalitarian	Traditional/ Transitional
Religion	Catholic or Non	Catholic
Spanish	English monolingual to Bilingual	Bilingual
Personal Traits	Spanish surname or Non; European phenotype or Non	Spanish surname; Non-European phenotype
Social Context (Peers)	Heterogeneous/ White	Heterogeneous/ Mexican

⁵⁵ See also Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, Zhou, Min and Carl L. Bankston. 1998. *Growing up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation..

Several factors were used in assigning families to one pattern versus the other, so no one factor “determines” whether someone falls into one category or the other. I used Spanish language ability, Catholic observance, importance of Mexican traditions to daily life, and strength of family memory to assist in categorizing individuals and families as either “thinned attachment” or “cultural maintenance.”

Considering cultural maintenance families first, Spanish language ability can be both a contributing factor as well as an outcome of the cultural maintenance category. Spanish language ability is part of a “feedback loop” for the cultural maintenance families: Spanish knowledge leads to the ability to create and maintain social networks and traditions that are Mexican-oriented. Because cultural maintenance individuals tend to marry endogamously (arguably as a result of shared language, social networks, ideologies and traditions), they tend to produce cultural maintenance offspring to whom they teach their shared culture, including Spanish. This “feedback loop” is not as influential for thinned attachment families. In this case, while Spanish language ability at the second generation *does not vary* between the cultural maintenance and thinned attachment families, the third generation’s linguistic proficiency helped to determine the family’s incorporation trajectory. For thinned attachment families, while the second generation is largely conversational or fluent in Spanish, intermarriage with Whites at the second generation leads to Spanish loss at the third generation.

Differences between the thinned attachment and cultural maintenance patterns widen from the second generation to the third generation. By the third generation shared traits between cultural maintenance and thinned attachment include: citizenship, English

monolingualism to English/Spanish bilingualism, middle class status, and a college education (or trajectory toward it). While thinned attachment and cultural maintenance are archetypes, they are best envisioned as two ends of an incorporation *spectrum*. As ideal types, the two groups boast many differences at the third generation. Cultural maintenance individuals recount family memories (of ethnic pride) more frequently, they more often have Spanish surnames and non-European or ambiguous physical features, they are more often Catholic, and they hold more traditional gender ideologies than thinned attachment individuals. The cultural maintenance camp lives in either majority-minority or heterogeneous locales and perceives widespread discrimination. In contrast, the thinned attachment camp lives in heterogeneous locales and perceives less discrimination in part because some successfully “pass” as non-Hispanic white. While I have little data on the marriage patterns of the third generation, current dating and marital choices (as well as value systems) suggest that cultural maintenance third generation individuals can either in- or out-marry whereas thinned attachment third generation individuals have a high probability of continuing their parents’ pattern of out-marriage. In sum, racial/ethnic awareness and cultural allegiance pervades the family life, social life, and practices of Mexican American cultural maintenance families.

This chapter highlights the Lopez family, who experienced the Chicano Movement as a watershed moment wherein racial consciousness peaked, and the Benavidas family, who were committed to their Mexican identity prior to the 1960s and the Chicano Movement therefore less shaped their racial identity. This chapter argues that historical context is heavily influential in how people come to understand themselves racially. First generation immigrants confronted Americanization, deportation, and

recruitment programs whereas the second and third generations experienced the Civil Rights Movement and the affirmative action eras, respectively.

The Importance of Historical Era in Biography and Identity

First Generation Juan Lopez: Americanization Programs, Deportation, and the Bracero Program

The Lopez family illustrates a “bumpy” process of assimilation (Gans 1992a) that emphasizes cultural maintenance in the second and third generations. Juan, the eighty-four year old who immigrated with his family as a child in the early 1920s, is staunchly assimilationist in outlook except for his desire for his children to marry co-ethnics. His fifty-seven year old son, Marcus, was an avid supporter of the Chicano Movement and disagrees with his father on several political issues because of his generational status and altered racial consciousness. Marcus’s thirty-five year old son, Antonio—who goes by “Antonio” at work and “Tony” in social circles—fluidly operates with both Anglos and Mexican Americans as a bilingual county deputy sheriff in Ventura, California.

History bears significantly on how people choose to express their racial identity. Waves of recruitment and deportation vacillated with the U.S.’s labor needs. “Americanization programs” (1915-1929) provided vocational and civic training in order to mold immigrants into “good Americans.” These programs targeted Mexican women because, as wives and mothers, they were seen as gateways to influence the cultural values of spouses and children (Sanchez 1994). These Americanization programs encouraged immigrants to abandon their natal traditions and conform to the American industrial order (Sanchez 1993). Soon thereafter, the Mexican government established

“Mexicanization programs” to invigorate ethnic consciousness and nationalistic fervor, with the goal of enticing Mexican expatriates to return to Mexico. These émigrés had learned new skills in the U.S. that the Mexican government hoped could be put to use in Mexico if they “won back” these Mexican nationals (Sanchez 1993: 122). The U.S. began deportation programs after the stock market crash of 1929. With economic prosperity fading in the U.S., many Mexicans also voluntarily left. The U.S. also forcibly removed the formerly “cheap, mobile labor” during the Great Depression (Sanchez 1993: 213) in a program called “Operation Deportation” that operated from 1930 until 1942 (Almaguer 1994). The Bracero Program, a Mexican labor recruitment program aimed at filling the wartime labor shortage, followed this repatriation campaign.

David Montejano (1987) argues that the 1920s-1940s was a period of segregation between Anglos and Mexicans.⁵⁶ Much like the Jim Crowe segregation between blacks and whites in the South, this Southwestern segregation was marked by rules regulating contact between Anglos and Mexicans. The division of labor was delineated by race: Anglos were the landholders and Mexicans were the laborers. A racial discourse of Anglo ethnocentrism and an ideology of Mexican racial inferiority supported and rationalized this segregation (Montejano 1987).

This historical background gives a context to the periods Juan lived through in Southern California.⁵⁷ Juan’s youth and young adulthood were between the 1920s-1950s, a time when assimilation paradigms and labor recruitment and deportation programs ordered the relationship between the U.S., whites, and Mexicans.

⁵⁶ While this study is specifically regarding Texas some of the findings, especially regarding dual labor markets, residential segregation, and racial discourses likely reflect national trends rather than wholly region-specific ones.

⁵⁷ While Juan arrived in the U.S. as a young child in the early 1920s most first generation immigrants in my sample arrived between the late 1930s and the early 1960s.

A first generation immigrant, Juan did not go beyond the second grade in grammar school and never learned to read or write. Juan did manual labor for years and was a security guard for nearly thirty years at a Mexican American cultural center. During World War II, Juan served for the U.S. in New Guinea for five years. He maintains that he never faced discrimination. His manual labor and security jobs were within his ethnic community which lessened his subjection to racial discrimination.⁵⁸ Owing to gratitude stemming from this “dual frame of reference” (Ogbu 1994), Juan would not criticize Americans who were affording him opportunity in the U.S. As we will see in Chapter Four, Juan’s narrative of gratitude and limited criticism is strikingly similar to the perspectives of other first generation immigrants his age with similar immigrant, class, and work histories.

While Juan married a Mexican woman, only one of his four children (two boys and two girls) married a Mexican. Concerned less with the race of his children’s spouses, he cared more that they “get along.” Juan was nonchalant about what he wished his children and grandchildren to preserve about their Mexican heritage. Juan’s parenting style was fairly assimilationist; he was laissez-faire about instructing his offspring in Mexican culture. Juan said that there was “nothing in particular to preserve about Mexican heritage except Spanish...but it was up to his family whether or not to speak it.”

Second Generation Marcus Lopez: The Chicano Movement

⁵⁸ Marcus, Juan’s son, believes that his father did in fact face discrimination but that he either did not recognize the discrimination or that it did not matter because he was so grateful to live a better life in the U.S. than he would have had in Mexico.

Marcus, one of the Lopez family's second generation sons, married a Mexican American woman⁵⁹ and was highly active in the Chicano Movement. Far from Juan's lukewarm commitment to Mexican cultural maintenance, Marcus agitated for Mexican American "cultural citizenship"⁶⁰ (Flores and Benmayor 1997) as a result of the Chicano Movement. A Brown Beret in the 1960s, Marcus's racial consciousness matured due to the social movement that legitimated both racial expression and mass mobilization for racial justice.

Marcus grew up on a lemon orchard, where his father was a ranch hand and his mother was a lemon picker. One of his jobs as a young boy was to help out his dad in the orchard, getting up before dawn to do the "dirty job" of lighting the "smudge pots" which were used to warm the orchard to avoid frost on the lemons. Another mark of working class status, Marcus remembers his mother "drawing lines of nylons on the back of her legs with mascara," to appear as if she had on real stockings and was fashionably dressed. Marcus's parents did not impress upon him any reverence for his Mexican heritage. They took a laissez-faire approach to adapting to the U.S., neither jettisoning nor preserving their Mexican culture: "They were just happy to have what they had and be where they were. My parents' didn't stop it [Mexican culture], but they didn't perpetuate it. Whatever happened happened."

Although Marcus was raised knowing he was Mexican American and he did not identify strongly with that background until the late 1960s, others nonetheless imposed a

⁵⁹ His first wife (Antonio's mother) and his second wife are both Mexican American.

⁶⁰ "Cultural citizenship" refers to social practices that claim and establish a distinct social space for Latinos. Arguing for incorporation without assimilation, "cultural citizenship" means Latino incorporation into U.S. society in a way that allows Latinos to be "both" Latino "and" American and permits cultural expressions that keep Latino identity alive and enriches the country.

racial and ethnic identity on him. For example, a racist high school counselor⁶¹, an embodiment of structural racism, blocked Marcus's educational progress. Only retrospectively did Marcus see his high school counselor's remark that "all [Mexican] people were good for were to be cooks and mechanics," as racist. Despite Marcus's mother's desire for him to continue his education, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps at age seventeen and eventually earned his General Education Diploma (GED).

It was in service in the military where Marcus learned about prejudice from white Texans. He reflects:

I didn't realize there was prejudice. I knew that people didn't like black people, but I didn't know there was prejudice against Hispanics or Mexicans. At the time I thought, "well, I'm not Black, so...." But I didn't realize there were prejudices until I got into the service.... My first exposure to prejudices was in the company I was assigned to because I came across [White] Texans. To them I was a bean-burner, a wetback, "come take my boots off, boy," "did your mom teach you how to make tortillas? Because I like tortillas." That was the first time I was exposed to actual prejudices and racism. I was kinda hurt by it. "You know, I'm an American."

Based on this experience of racial hatred in the military, Marcus perceived his high school counselor as a racist as well. Marcus clearly links his experience of prejudice with becoming politically active and joining the Brown Berets during the Chicano Movement. I asked Marcus, "How did those experiences with the counselor and the Texans in the Marines affect you?" Marcus responded:

It made me very angry. Angry enough that when I got out of the service, I joined the Brown Berets. I wanted to make change. The Brown Berets were equivalent to the Black Panthers. They would do change even if it meant violence. I didn't know if I could be violent, but I knew I could make change. The person that probably impressed me the most and really solidified how I felt was when I met and talked with César Chávez. I met him and I became [one of] his bodyguard[s]...when he was in California visiting Cuyama, Nipomo, Santa

⁶¹ This story is elaborated in Chapter Five.

Barbara, and over in Bakersfield. I got to know him fairly well.... We were his [armed] bodyguards. There was a lot of threats against him, a lot of death threats.

As a Brown Beret, Marcus helped the poor (migrant Mexican agricultural workers and their families) by setting up shelters and clinics that provided food, clothing, and medical care. The Southern California chapter of the Brown Berets with which Marcus worked also organized MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán] at several college and university campuses as well as set up local community cultural centers.

Marcus's increased racial pride and "presentation of self" is based in part on the Civil Rights Movement:

I know there is a difference between the way you present yourself, the way you carry yourself, no matter if you are Hispanic or not, that perpetuates awareness to somebody else. ...I learned this in communication class. When you look at someone and you have eye contact with them and you say, "my name is Marcus Lopez," they tend to kind of like, "OK." There's a difference between [that and] "my name is Marcus Lopez" (nervous, eyes downcast). ...I've learned to...just project..."I know who I am, who are you?" ...If I detect any kind of a racial thing, because of who I am, I just don't participate in that person's mind game.... The power of presentation is a very powerful thing. I'm not sure if that was a defense mechanism that grew over the years....

Defense mechanism or not, Marcus's more assertive presentation of self is a consequence of not just a communications class but of a post-Civil Rights period that allows space for the pride and confidence of ethnic/racial minorities.

Another ramification of the Civil Rights Movement was the creation of multicultural education curriculum in the 1970s (Yamane 2001). Multicultural curriculum legitimated the study of ethnic/racial and gender groups that were previously

shunned by disciplinary canons.⁶² This impact of the Civil Rights Movement affects the education of students today. Marcus commented:

I thought it [Mexican American art class] was the greatest thing in the world.... I didn't know that the Aztecs really did invent astrological things, I didn't know that the Mayans invented the decimal point. You assume it's the Chinese or somebody, you know? Mayans and their agriculture, they grew crops with irrigation systems before the Egyptians knew how to irrigate with the Nile. Wow. That really got me going, as far as learning. I even took Black Studies classes to understand Black people a little more.

Marcus sees multicultural classes as a way to learn more about himself as well as a way to become acquainted with other groups as well. Indeed, multicultural education raises levels of understanding across groups and therefore lowers distrust, heightens egalitarianism, and underscores commonalities while appreciating differences (Astin 1993; Duster 1991; Giroux 1992; Hurtado 2001; Maher 1994; Nieto 1999; Vasquez 2005). In sum, Marcus sees that racial tensions have eased since the 1960s and that "we're accepted a little more but not quite a part of the mainstream."

For Marcus, as many others, a key to Mexican American identity is to "remember who you are and have pride." He added, "You don't have to carry a piñata to show you are Mexican." Indeed, his definition of Mexican American allows for acculturation and shedding of some traditional symbols of Mexican membership. Similar to thinned attachment families, Marcus's family insisted that "keeping the importance of family" is

⁶² Many third generation respondents spoke about positive experiences they had with multicultural education but since Tony Lopez did not attend college he had less educational experience to comment on and did not focus on this point.

a keystone of what it means to be Mexican American.⁶³ More so than other respondents, Marcus emphasized his Mayan and Aztec roots that underlie Mexican culture.

When I asked Marcus how he would respond to his father's claim that he never experienced discrimination, he said that his father "felt he owed the white man loyalty because his life was better here [than in Mexico]." In contrast, Marcus discerned racist joking that went undetected by his father. Marcus used his own consciousness-raising experiences to open his father's eyes. Marcus related a conversation in which he and his father were called "wetbacks" in a grocery store: "They're not laughing because they like you, they're laughing because you are different and you are not what they like."

The Chicano Movement raised Marcus's racial consciousness but did not inspire his father. Juan's perspective on the United States and his relationship to his new country solidified before the Chicano Movement, during a period of Americanization programs and U.S. government-sanctioned cycles of Mexican labor recruitment and deportation. Juan was unmoved by the Chicano Movement because he was loathe to criticize a country that had given him upward mobility. Marcus's and his father's perspectives are distinguished by their generation in the U.S. and their respective relationships to the civil rights fervor of the 1960s. Their nativity, generation, and historical era during their "coming of age," largely determines both Juan's and Marcus's relationship to the Civil Rights Movement. Marcus's commentary on his father's indefatigable work ethic sets the stage for a generational difference between him and his father regarding relationship to the U.S. and racial pride:

I think my dad's biggest accomplishment is living to be eighty-four (chuckle). 'Cuz, he worked hard. All his life. ...I think all of his fingers had been broken at

⁶³ As argued in Chapter Two, this emphasis on family is a nearly universal trait shared by many other cultures, weakening this claim as particularly "cultural."

one time, and still going to work. I don't think I ever remember him being home. He'd go to work sick.... I remember one time he smashed all his fingers trying to change a plow apparatus on the tractor. It slipped and the bars came down and smashed his fingers. That happened early in the afternoon, [yet] he worked all afternoon, then he came home and...he soaked his hand in ice water, wrapped it up, took some aspirin. Didn't even go to the doctor. The next day he went back to work, he just put tape around his fingers. I knew all his fingers were broken. When he came home his hand was just all crumpled up. I remember him taking his fingers and going like this [he tugs on each finger from the tip, one at a time] and just straightening them out. I don't know if you noticed, but his hands are all [makes a mangled pose with his hand]. They healed, but they healed deformed.

Marcus proceeded to tell a similarly dreadful tale of the tractor rolling over his father's foot and yet the next day he "wrapped his foot and...tied his boot real tight" and limped to work. While Marcus admired his father's work ethic, the two maintained political differences.

Nation of birth, citizenship status, and generation marked Juan and Marcus's political styles. Marcus reflected on the political philosophy that drove his father's tireless work ethic:

He thought that he owed everything to the white man for what he had. He felt compelled that he had to go to work.... He owed them for the life that he had. ...He felt that the life that he had was better than what life would be in Mexico. I used to tell him, "what are you doing this for? They don't care about you!" So he and I just had big differences. [He and I used to get down into] knock-down drag-out fights about...me being a Brown Beret...I was "ungrateful" and all of that, "they're just radicals, they don't love this country!" We had big differences.

Juan felt a sense of debt and obligation to the country into which he immigrated whereas Marcus felt that he had a duty to fight for equal rights and representation. The first generation paid its debt of gratitude by a robust work ethic whereas the second generation felt its responsibility was to shore up "cultural citizenship," combat subordination, and highlight its visibility as first-class citizens.

As argued in the previous chapter, marriage is a key element in influencing a thinned attachment or cultural maintenance pathway of incorporation. Keeping in mind that there is a spectrum of incorporation possibilities, most thinned attachment families out-married while most cultural maintenance families in-married. For Marcus, “All of [his] relationships have been with Hispanics” because he desired cultural similarity. Marcus followed the advice of his parents to “stay within [his] own, stay with a Mexican girl,” as both his first and second wives were Mexican (mother of his first son, Tony, and his second son, respectively). Marcus’s parents advised him, “White girls treat you bad.” It is unclear precisely what that means—whether they felt White girls are too independent-minded and not subservient enough to be good wives, or whether they conflated race, religion, and culture and feared their son might partner with a non-Catholic, non-Mexican woman. This male in-marriage provides a rich gendered contrast to the female out-marriage seen in the previous chapter on thinned attachment. Note that I am *not* making a gendered argument about which sex is more likely to marry endogamously versus exogamously. Table 3.2 demonstrates that there is no clear gender divide regarding who in-marries versus out-marries. In fact, in-marriage was the most frequent coupling at all three generational levels for the entire sample.

Table 3.2

IN- AND OUT-MARRIAGE BY SEX AND GENERATION

<u>Female In-Marriage</u> G1: 6 (All) G2: 12 G3: 2	<u>Female Out-Marriage</u> G1: 0 G2: 1 G3: 1
<u>Male In-Marriage</u> G1: 2 (All) G2: 12 G3: 1	<u>Male Out-Marriage</u> G1: 0 G2: 3 G3: 4

Missing Data: G2: 1; G3: 22

“In-marriage” includes all Latinos ethnic groups.

Preference for in-marriage is the chief way Marcus’ parents pressed for cultural preservation. While they may not have stressed “Mexican culture” per se, they were committed to promoting intra-marriage in their children (although only one of four children actually followed this advice). While Marcus believes it is desirable to have ethnic/racial commonality with a partner, he does not see ethnic matching as a necessary ingredient for a happy marriage: “I’ve seen mixed marriages where there is a clash of cultures...and I’ve seen mixed marriages where they’ve blended real well. I’ve seen both.” Although not a “deal-breaker,” Marcus also prefers that his two sons marry Mexican (or Hispanic) women.

The vast majority of cultural maintenance families are Catholic in all three generations. While Juan and his grandson Tony are Catholics, Marcus professes holding

American Indian religious beliefs. Marcus reveres not just his Mexican predecessors but his Native American and Aztec ancestors. He remembers that Mexicans were born of the Spanish conquest of the Aztec and Native American civilizations with the arrival of Hernan Cortés in Mexico City (then Tenochtitlán) in 1521.⁶⁴ Marcus's religious beliefs are not so much a departure from Catholicism as they are an attempt to return to belief systems that pre-existed the arrival of the Spanish conquistador's Catholicism to the "New World."

Another factor that distinguishes cultural maintenance families is an emphasis on racial pride. Marcus propounds a racial pride that is not ostentatious but is incorporated into one's spirit and outlook. Marcus counsels his children, "I tell them...to remember who you are and be proud of it. You don't have to carry a piñata around with you to let people know who you are." Even given this commitment to Mexican pride and representation, cultural maintenance families are not immune to attenuation of Mexican cultural knowledge that is a byproduct of cultural and socioeconomic adaptation to the U.S. As parents—of any generation—invest time and energy in career advancement and socioeconomic achievement in order to increase the life chances of themselves and their children, they have less time to continue cultural traditions. Marcus describes this cultural forgetting:

I think it's important to keep it [Spanish] to ensure that the culture stays. There is a lot of tradition that even I don't know about, that I've forgotten, that my mom and grandma used to teach us and tell us about. [My brother] keeps alive making tamales on Christmas Eve thing, for the family. [He] does it every year; my mom taught him. Again, it's to get the family together. It took me a long time to get back to that, or to realize that. I got too career-oriented.

⁶⁴ The Spanish Conquest lasted through the 1780s, during which time the Spanish Franciscan Missions under Father Junipero Serra in present-day California were constructed.

While Marcus regrets the dearth of time he spent at home, he was frequently away from home in order to secure his family's financial well-being. The household division of labor between Marcus and his first wife was traditional in that he was the breadwinner and his wife charge of childrearing and other domestic concerns.

In order to solidify his family's place on a middle rung of the socioeconomic ladder, Marcus worked diligently as a supervisor in a growing corporation. Due to his concerted efforts in his occupation and hopes for integration into the U.S. middle class, Marcus made fewer efforts to secure cultural knowledge for himself and his children. Furthermore, a gender analysis would indicate that Marcus, as a man, was likely inclined to leave the food, feasts, and festivals to a female spouse because such cultural activities would fall under a woman's domain within a traditional household division of labor. As Nira Yuval-Davis writes, "Women are often constructed as the cultural symbols of the collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity's 'honor' and as its intergenerational reproducers of culture" (Yuval-Davis 1997: 67). In this conception, women carry a particular "burden of representation" (Yuval-Davis 1997: 45) as symbolic bearers of collective identity. Women are imagined as mothers of children (or whole families) that they nurture within a national or cultural framework. This gendered logic that positions women as carriers of culture may have also played into Marcus' parents' advice to marry a Mexican woman rather than a (non-Hispanic) White woman. If Marcus married a Mexican woman, under a patriarchal home set-up at least, his wife would be in charge of raising children within their shared Mexican culture. This way, Marcus could continue with his career aspirations and rest satisfied that his children were receiving cultural instruction from his wife, the implicitly designated "carrier of culture."

This is one reading of Marcus's parents' counsel and his own adult actions that accounts for how his gender influenced his life. Whether deliberate or not, Marcus was active in the public sphere, gaining a financial foothold for his family, until his retirement. Seeing the imbalance of his public versus private sphere efforts impelled him to take an early retirement. Now he can be found baking in his newly remodeled kitchen, awaiting the arrival of his teenage son from high school football practice.

Marcus reflects on how his devotion to his family through dedication to his career allowed for cultural forgetting. Now, in the early days of retirement, he relishes enriching his cultural knowledge. Still, he is somewhat abashed that these are skills he must learn rather than simply intuit. Marcus comments: "You know what the sad part is? ...I'm taking a cooking class this month to learn how to make salsa. ...The guy giving the class is a white guy (laugh)... I want to learn how to do salsa, how to make a good carne asada, a good chile verde, a good chile Colorado, good carnitas." Marcus is trying to counteract his cultural loss through active learning and practice. Interestingly, since Mexican food has crossed over into American mainstream cuisine (Davis 2000), it is possible for a "white guy" to teach a man named Marcus Lopez how to make salsa.

Third Generation Tony Lopez: Affirmative Action Era

Tony is second generation on his mother's side (his mother emigrated from Mexico) and third generation on his father's side (his paternal grandparents emigrated from Mexico). Tony's maternal grandparents were incredibly influential in his life: "I spent more time with my [maternal] grandparents than with my own parents when I was

young.... They were pretty much my world.”⁶⁵ Thus, a good portion of Tony’s cultural knowledge flows directly from Mexican grandparents as well as Mexican intra-married parents.

Tony’s maternal grandparents heavily influenced his racial/ethnic identity. His maternal grandfather hailed originally from Spain and his maternal grandmother was born in Mexico. Both grandparents persistently emphasized that Tony was “Hispanic...because ‘Mexican’ was a dirty word. ‘Mexicans’ were fieldworkers.” This claim, interestingly, focuses on one grandparent from Spain and omits the history of the spouse originally from Mexico. It also obscures the history of Tony’s paternal grandfather from Mexico. Tony explains how his maternal grandmother “converted” from “Mexican” to “Spanish”: “My grandma was born and raised in Mexico, but she still considered herself Spanish.⁶⁶ I think it was...because Mexican was a dirty word, a lower caste. ...My grandmother considered herself educated because she could read and write, so she even considered herself Spanish....” Tony was taught that since they “were supposedly descendents from more educated upper-class, so [they] were ‘Hispanic.’” To this day, Tony will “even catch [him]self correcting people: ‘you’re Mexican?’ ‘No, I’m Hispanic.’”

Unlike most other cultural maintenance third generation Mexican Americans, Tony reports that because of his physical appearance (pale skin and dark hair) he is often perceived as White, most often of Italian descent. Also, unlike many third generation

⁶⁵ One drawback to my sampling strategy is that I interview only one side of every family. In Tony’s case, I interviewed his paternal line because they fit my project’s race and generational profile, yet it was his maternal line that was more influential in his formative years. It is noteworthy that *both* of Tony’s parents are of Mexican descent (his mother immigrating as a child) and that his Mexican grandparents were very involved in his upbringing. This generational proximity to Mexico and close-knit relationship to his Mexican grandparents predisposed him to a cultural maintenance lifestyle.

⁶⁶ This “ethnic conversion” arose in other families who similarly attempted to claim a higher or more “respectable” status in the racial hierarchy.

Mexican Americans, he feels socially accepted by the mainstream. Reasons for this feeling of inclusion are probably based on his light skin color and his ability to speak English without a Spanish accent. Furthermore, he is an American mainstream cultural insider in that he does not fall into cultural stereotypes of Hispanics such as having a “heavy accent, capped teeth, really bad dentistry, thick dark hair, dressed kind of a mixture, maybe outdated...” Tony has an “ethnic option” (Waters 1990) and can pass because he is phenotypically ambiguous, flawlessly bilingual, middle class, and portrays mainstream U.S. culture in his behavior. In Tony’s words: “I have an easier time blending in and I think a lot of it has to do with that I don’t fit a lot of stereotypes.” Tony conflates race and class in this narrative, yet it is probably in part due to his middle class status that he escapes intense discrimination. This racial (and cultural) “passing” combined with his middle class status and his profession as a county deputy sheriff likely shield him from overt discrimination.⁶⁷

Tony’s maternal grandparents emigrated from Mexico due to poverty in the 1920s. They chose to reside in Santa Barbara due to the pull of social networks—a cousin was already living in the area. Tony’s maternal grandfather was a carpenter by trade, but because he spoke so little English could not join the union and practice his trade. He ended up working at a hospital for over thirty years as a dishwasher. Tony’s maternal grandmother worked in the same hospital for approximately twenty-five years, cutting vegetables. Similar to the story of Maria Montes profiled in Chapter Two, Tony’s immigrant grandparents were prudent with their minimum wage earnings and bought a house at a time when the Santa Barbara housing market was not inflated. Tony marvels

⁶⁷ While Tony says he has not experienced discrimination, his father disagrees: “He’s experienced it, cuz he’s told me. I think his experience with racism has been more professional. I don’t think racism nowadays is where they call you ‘wetback.’”

at his grandparents' financial success: "I never realized until I turned about fifteen or sixteen...that my grandfather was a dishwasher and my grandmother was a vegetable cutter." Around that age Tony inquired as to his grandparents' job responsibilities:

My grandpa said, "I come [to the hospital] every day at four in the morning and I wash all the dishes. I do it for eight hours a day. Five days a week. Till one o'clock in the afternoon." He never referred to himself as a dishwasher; he referred to it as "I help make the hospital run." ...Without him doing what he did, things would stop. My grandmother would cut the vegetables for the dishes, the soups, the salads. ...I was so proud of them. I would never be embarrassed to say [they] were just a dishwasher and vegetable cutter. Everyday, it would amaze me, they would iron their uniforms. Every day. Nobody saw them. They wore smocks. They wore the cleanest uniforms and they ironed them every day and they shined their shoes. That just kills me. Talk about taking pride in what you do.

Tony's grandparents made discursive and behavioral claims of "making the hospital run," viewing their minimum-wage jobs as integral to the functioning of a professional enterprise.⁶⁸

Tony's maternal grandparents who helped raise him had a traditional household marked by a gendered division of labor: "It was the traditional old-world family: the woman was the housewife and did the inside things and the guy did the outside work." On his father's side of the family this traditional gendered division of labor also prevailed, providing Tony a coherent picture of what home life is supposed to look like. Tony adds, "both of my grandmothers were good cooks of Mexican food," noting the role that women traditionally play in passing on cultural aspects through "feeding the family"

⁶⁸ Cinzia Solari (2006) demonstrates that people who work in service industries can garner an extra degree of dignity and self-respect as they rhetorically professionalize their work. In her study of Russian and Ukrainian homecare workers (all Russian-speaking) in San Francisco, California, Solari found that a subset of her population actively professionalized their work by calling themselves "government workers" (for they were paid by government checks even though the elderly individual had authority to hire and fire them). They made this discursive assertion in order to reject the stigma of being a personal attendant Solari, Cinzia. 2006. "Professionals and Saints: How Immigrant Careworkers Negotiate Gender Identities at Work." *Gender & Society* 20:301-331..

(DeVault 1991). These traditional gender ideologies that were comfortable to Tony contributed to his cultural maintenance.

Tony’s Spanish fluency is due in part to his maternal grandparents: “They could speak a little bit [of English], but they always spoke Spanish in the household. So my first language was Spanish, then I transitioned to English when I got into school.” As you can see from the Table 3.3 on cultural maintenance families, the majority of third generation Mexican Americans in this category is conversational in Spanish.

Table 3.3

Spanish Language Ability in Cultural Maintenance Families (18 Families)

	Less Than Conversational	Conversational	Fluent	Number
Gen 1	0	0	100% (n=5)	5
Gen 2	5.2% (n=1)	31.6% (n=6)	63.2% (n=12)	19
Gen 3	22.2% (n=4)	61.1% (n=11)	16.7% (n=3)	18
Total:	11.9% (n=5)	40.5% (n=17)	47.6% (n=20)	n=42

Table 3.4

Spanish Language Ability in Thinned Attachment Families (11 Families)

	Less Than Conversational	Conversational	Fluent	Number
Gen 1	0	0	100% (n=3)	3
Gen 2	9.1% (n=1)	36.4% (n=4)	54.5% (n=6)	11
Gen 3	81.8% (n=9)	18.2% (n=2)	0	11
Total:	40% (n=10)	24% (n=6)	36% (n=9)	n=25

Table 3.5

Spanish Language Ability in Total Sample (29 Families)

	Less Than Conversational	Conversational	Fluent	Number
Gen 1	0	0	100% (n=8)	8
Gen 2	6.7% (n=2)	33.3% (n=10)	60% (n=18)	30
Gen 3	44.8% (n=13)	44.8% (n=13)	10.3% (n=3)	29
Total:	22.4% (n=15)	34.3% (n=23)	43.3% (n=29)	n=67

Tony, however, is a fluent Spanish speaker because he spoke Spanish with his grandparents. As a comparison, none of the third generation Mexican Americans in the thinned attachment category are fluent Spanish speakers and the vast majority are “less than conversational.” Table 3.5 breaks down the Spanish language knowledge of the entire sample by generation. This table shows that, in accordance with literature on native language retention among immigrants, Spanish language knowledge dwindles with each succeeding generation (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut and Portes 2001).

Though occupational discrimination is well documented (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Pager and Quillian 2005), affirmative action has opened up occupations to some members of minority groups since the mass mobilization of the 1960s. Tony was actively recruited to be in the Ventura County sheriff’s department, a fact he attributes to affirmative action policies. As do others who feel they have benefited from affirmative action policies, Tony quickly justifies his job placement by saying he works hard. A sentiment unheard of a generation prior, Tony believes that his race has been advantageous to his career:

As far as getting into new jobs, new promotions, new positions, I think because I'm Hispanic and because I'm willing to work hard, I think [my race] has kicked open a lot of doors for me. I think that I've been given a lot of chances based on not just the fact that I'm Hispanic but that I work hard and that I get things done.

Tony believes his Mexican background has been an asset to him on the job because he began his career after the Civil Rights Movement began to take effect and because he lives and works in a largely Mexican American town. The demographics of his geographic area insulate him from the harshest of racial obstacles. Tony refers to the mix of Hispanics and whites in the greater Ventura area and how his heritage and Spanish language give him an advantage on the job: "I think right now Hispanics are taking over Ventura, White people are going to be a minority. We [county sheriff's department] teach people who don't speak Spanish; we send them to [Spanish] classes. They pay me extra because I speak Spanish. I look at being Spanish as...being ahead." Tony believes that his background and language ability were big "selling points" for him since he can communicate with both White and Hispanic community members in an official capacity.

Like many cultural maintenance third generation individuals, Tony feels "a lot of pressure" to represent the Hispanic community. Tony, more so than most, is in a job that highlights his bicultural and bilingual skill sets so he is more obviously a representative of the Mexican community. Some thinned attachment individuals also felt the need to positively represent their Mexican heritage through their successes. For all third generation individuals, the pressure to achieve academically, financially, and occupationally is a reaction to being identified as Mexican American and feeling the negative stereotypes that often comes with that label. Tony explains: "[I am] representing the Hispanic community and [I] just don't want to mess up.... I want to be a

good role model and be available and help everybody. I want to carry my people up to the next level.” Tony continues, referring to the negative stereotypes that he is working against:

I hate being around other deputy sheriffs who immediately label Hispanics as field workers. So I really promote that all they need is a chance. There is always going to be a population of bad, or a population of not so good. It’s the same with White people. I try to reach out as much as I can.... It’s important for me to carry myself a certain way and make sure my name [badge] is displayed prominently. ... Being in uniform I can help a lot.

Tony considers his race and Spanish ability to be an asset on the job. He is both a liaison between the White and Hispanic populations as well an advocate for the latter.

Since Tony secured his job in a post-Civil Rights era and during a period of affirmative action hiring, his workplace is set up to allow him to maintain his Hispanic culture on the job. A cultural maintenance incorporation trajectory is promoted by Mexican Americans in his community and is more widely accepted by society in the new millennium than it was for his father’s and grandfather’s young adulthood. Thus, Tony’s work structure permits him to continue on his cultural maintenance pathway rather than divert him toward the thinned attachment option. Further, Tony is fluent in Spanish and so is able to wield that ability confidently as an asset, a tool in his “cultural toolkit” (Swidler 1986) which facilitates his claim to a seamless and coherent Hispanic identity.⁶⁹

A cultural maintenance trajectory does not preclude progressive ideals. Tony, like most of his third generation peers, was frustrated with patriarchy: “I think there is still some old traditional families that are not going with the times and I hate to see the

⁶⁹ As you will see in Chapter Six, many second and third generation Mexican Americans who were not fluent in Spanish were timid about claiming an ethnic identity. Some dismissed Spanish as a requirement for claiming an ethnic identity while others felt far more sheepish about lacking what they felt was a critical element to a coherent ethnic identity. Further, peers often used Spanish knowledge as a yardstick for who qualified as an “authentic” or “true” Mexican American.

women subservient and speak when spoken to. I don't like that, and I see that a lot, being a deputy sheriff." As interested in preserving and representing his Hispanic heritage as Tony is, he hopes to "equal it out." Disturbed by the enforced subservience of women that persists in some Hispanic homes, Tony strikes a balance between preserving tradition and adopting more egalitarian gender practices. Cultural maintenance does not require entrenchment of tradition to the detriment of women's liberation and female empowerment.

Tony is currently unmarried with no children, leaving open the question of how he and a prospective partner will raise their potential children, the fourth generation. While Tony believes keeping Spanish is "extremely important," his openness to exogamy may hamper the possibility of a Spanish-speaking household. Tony considers how important racial matching within a marriage is to him:

I don't have any strong traits that mandate that a Hispanic woman would be the only person that would understand where I'd be coming from. Personally, I'd like to marry outside the race because I want to learn about that other culture. ...I wouldn't want to marry somebody based on the fact that she's got to be Hispanic and we've got to share the same traits and keep it going.... Yeah, that's nice, but I don't see that as important.

Yet, it's "unbelievably important" to Tony that he pass on Spanish to his potential children, not just as a marker of their heritage but as a linguistic asset in a globalizing world.⁷⁰ Along with most respondents, Tony desires to preserve the importance of family, manners, respect, and food (he specifies, "real Mexican food: menudo, tamales; not chalupas or churros").

⁷⁰ While retaining Catholicism was highly valued by others, Tony was anomalous in that he emphasized this less.

Tony has maintained his Mexican culture for several reasons. First and foremost, he had two parents of Mexican (or Spanish) descent and a close-knit extended family on his maternal side that reinforced his parents' ideologies and cultural teachings. Thus, two family generations—his parents and grandparents—could reinforce other Mexican-oriented elements such as a traditional gender ideology, Catholicism, Spanish, strong family memories and cultural traditions. Having a strong relationship with his maternal grandparents (and consistent but infrequent contact with his paternal grandparents) also promoted a strong family memory. Hearing stories directly from his grandparents about their lives in Mexico, rather than indirectly through his parents, enlivened the significance of Mexico to him and his family. His parents' endogamy further reinforced this cultural commonality.

The Civil Rights Movement: A Comparison Point

The Civil Rights Movement did not affect all Mexican American families in the same way or to the same degree. Thinned attachment families were less involved in and affected by the Civil Rights Movement largely because they were less highly identified as Mexican American and did not necessarily perceive the racial politics of the time as a potential benefit to them. However, engagement in the Civil Rights Movement varied even among cultural maintenance families. Another family, the Benavidas family, is an example of a cultural maintenance family who was sympathetic to, but not highly involved in, the Movement.

Class position seems to be the primary difference between who the Civil Rights Movement incited to race consciousness and who it did not. A family's middle class

status at the time of immigration can “afford” the family the opportunity to live out their cultural way of life without the same challenges as lower- or working-class families. In contrast to most families I interviewed who became middle class in the second generation, the Benavidas family’s middle class status at the time of immigration afforded them the freedom to display cultural and racial pride without heavy scrutiny from their neighbors and peers. While class distinction was not a guarantee against racial prejudice, it was certainly a buffer. Because of the class privilege of a middle class immigration, the Benavidas family did not partake in the Civil Rights Movement in the same way that their working-class Mexican American brethren did, such as the Lopez family. The Benavidas family, who were class-distinct from those most involved in the mass mobilization of the 1960s, offers a different view of how the cultural maintenance paradigm can be lived out.

Second generation Benjamin Benavidas’ youth typified a number of factors that lead to cultural maintenance. He lived in an East Los Angeles ethnic enclave in his childhood, occasionally spent summers in Mexico, was raised Catholic, and was also raised speaking Spanish at home and English at school. Residing in an ethnic enclave allowed Benjamin and his natal family to easily maintain cultural distinctions without pressure to assimilate. Marriage is as key a gateway for cultural maintenance families (endogamy) as it is for thinned attachment families (exogamy). As with most of his cultural maintenance second generation peers, Benjamin married a Mexican American woman.

Catholicism reinforces a cultural maintenance lifestyle. Benjamin commented on the fused nature of Catholicism and Mexican identity: “we would celebrate anything that

related to the Catholic Church. ...The Catholic Church was part of being Mexican. It's inextricable. Mexican traditions...went along with what was happening with the Catholic Church."

Parenting style also plays into the racial/ethnic identity formation of the children.

Benjamin comments:

We never were pressured to assimilate.... My mom is a Mexicana and had maintained dual citizenship.... We never really gave into assimilation. ...My kids are like that too...sort of non-conformist in that we don't go along with the crowd so you can establish your own identity.

Knowledge of family history, or family memory, plays a key role in perpetuating a sense of history, "roots," family and ethnic pride.

Benjamin's racial self-descriptor flows from family knowledge and a firm sense of place. Benjamin uses the term "a child of the Southwest" to incorporate both his and his wife's experience (her family goes back several generations in Arizona). "A child of the Southwest" makes sense to him because it is inclusive of racial mixture and is grounded in a territory that has remained constant beneath national boundary-drawing. While Benjamin asserts a Chicano—as well as Mexican—self-title, it is not highly connected with the political content that produced the term in the 1960s.

Benjamin only made one reference to the Civil Rights Movement during our interview. He mentioned it not as a personal watershed moment, as did Marcus and others, but as a historical period of hope. When I asked what he wished for the next generation, Benjamin referred to the hope and promise of the 1960s:

I would like to see the cycle broken where Mexicanos have been beat up for generations and generations and get here [U.S.] and get beat up more. ...Be able

to lift yourself up and fight back. ...The only time that I've seen that successfully happen is when César Chávez...was able to organize people who were powerless and to take on one of the most powerful industries in the country. I saw...there was a sense of pride and a sense of dignity.... That was a point where I felt things could turn around.

In contrast to Marcus Lopez, Benjamin experienced the Civil Rights Movement from a different social location. More distanced from the Chicano Movement because of his class privilege, Benjamin saw the 1960s as a time to “turn around that whole [terrible] dynamic” of exploitative migrant laborer. The Civil Rights era did not figure prominently in Benjamin’s narrative because his family already possessed a degree of social, financial, and cultural capital for which the Movement was agitating. Yet, even while the Benavidas family was not involved in the Chicano Movement, they benefited from the progressive reforms it urged. Like Tony Lopez, third generation Caitlyn Benavidas thinks that affirmative action policies may assist her in securing a job because she “brings a diverse element” to the workplace.⁷¹

Discussion

All three generations in the Lopez family understood what it meant to be Mexican American slightly differently. For Juan, born and raised in Mexico and an adult immigrant to the United States, his racial/ethnic claim was “Mexican,” without hesitation. For Marcus, suffering racial discrimination in high school and in the U.S. military led him to become a Civil Rights Activist. His social activism sprang from his commitment to be viewed and treated as a first class U.S. citizen, equal to his European-descent U.S. citizen peers. He pictured himself as a Mexican American and U.S. citizen. Due to some

⁷¹ When she discusses that she may be a beneficiary of affirmative action, Caitlyn is quick to note that she also “has a Bachelor’s of Arts from University of California, Riverside,” much in the same way Tony Lopez stresses his job-related qualifications.

gains in equal opportunity employment policies, Tony, the third generation, viewed his biculturalism and bilingualism as an asset rather than a disability. Tony's self-title of "Hispanic" over more Mexican-oriented options reflects society's historical legacy of anti-Mexican feeling and his grandparents' defense mechanism of calling themselves "Spanish."

Jere Takahashi's (1997) work regarding Japanese immigrants and their families found that one's "political style" is a result of one's political context (particularly racial milieu and discourses) plus one's biography. Each generation has a particular set of political styles that tend to be patterned reactions to contemporary political climates. Furthermore, generationally marked political styles reflect transitions in political and racial consciousness. Takahashi discovered that first generation immigrants from Japan (Issei) embraced conservative race politics and a defensive political style using law and courts due to their lack of U.S. citizenship (Takahashi 1997: 24, 198). The second generation Japanese Americans (Nisei) who came of age in the 1920s and 1930s were assimilationist and accommodationist. However, the third generation Japanese Americans (Sansei) who came of age in the '60s and '70s, the same coming of age period of my second generation Mexican American respondents, pursued protest politics. Both the Sansei and second generation Mexican Americans pursued a politics of confrontation and mass action modeled after the Black Power movement. As these studies show, historical period can have a significant and direct impact on a generation's political strategy, racial awareness and national identity.

The progression in the Lopez family's racial/ethnic identity claims, and the content of those claims, was greatly influenced by historical period. Juan, Mexican by

birth, was on U.S. soil during the time of Americanization programs that aimed to eliminate cultural dissimilarities between immigrants and natives. He was also present during periods of U.S. government-sponsored recruitment and deportation of Mexican workers, according to the labor needs of the U.S. Grateful for a chance at upward mobility, Juan demonstrated his patriotism and reflected the racial discourses at the time by being assimilationist, with a hint of preservationist instinct regarding marriage.

As Marcus demonstrates, the Chicano Movement was a watershed period for many Mexican Americans.⁷² The Civil Rights Movement, of which the Chicano Movement was a part, was a critical point that marked a change of course for the racial identity formation and cultural expression of U.S. minority groups. Through raising their own consciousness as well as the awareness of European-descent Americans about their presence, rights, and culture, many Mexican Americans were able to more freely experience and express their racial selves during and after the Civil Rights era. As Doug McAdam's (1988) research on Freedom Summer indicates, one does not need to be an activist in a social movement in order to reap its benefits. Nonetheless, activists were more likely than others to remain political as a result of their participation, in part by virtue of their stronger organizational and social network affiliations (McAdam 1988).

The Chicano Movement, as performance, can be viewed as a collective action that "highlights the common official values of the society in which it occurs" and thereby rejuvenates the society's morality system (Goffman 1973: 35, 69). The social

⁷² The Feminist Movement was occurring at roughly the same time, a social movement also experienced by second generation Mexican American men and women. While the Feminist Movement does not figure in the narratives of this three-generation male family it was influential in the feminist consciousness of both men and women in the second and third generations. Women, in particular, were affected by the rhetoric of equality of this movement and it serves as a background trope against which third generation men and women use (if implicitly) to justify their belief in gender equality and why patriarchy and machismo should be dismantled. Tamara Rosenberg, from Chapter Two, briefly cites the Feminist Movement as both echoing and substantiating her belief system regarding gender equality.

movements of the 1960s reinvigorated racial/ethnic groups' identity, sense of entitlement, and need for recognition. If culture is performance, as some scholars argue (Bellah 1986; Goffman 1973; Hochschild 1983; Wedeen 1999), the Civil Rights Movement performed the culture of rights and belonging. For Erving Goffman, selves are constructed through arenas of interaction. Individuals establish their sense of self through practice: "This self itself does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of his action.... This self...is a *product* of the scene that comes off, and is not a *cause* of it" (Goffman 1973: 252). The Chicano Movement helped shape the self by providing a social context and discourses of racial resistance, whether or not one was a primary actor within it.⁷³

It is a credit to the Civil Rights Movement and affirmative action era that Tony feels that his race has "kicked open doors, huge doors" for him. Unlike his father whose educational progress was clearly stymied by racial discrimination, a fact that incited his Chicano Movement activism with the Brown Berets, Tony's prime career-building years followed the Civil Rights Movement.

Tony's father's activism in the Chicano Movement also contributed to his cultural maintenance inclination. Marcus's staunch representation of his race/ethnicity informed the principles he taught his son. Further, being aware of his father's activist history, above and beyond parent-child instruction, heightened Tony's awareness of the importance and potential value of retaining Mexican culture in the United States.

Political era influences self-identification choices. Some Latin Americans emphasize their Spanish roots in order to be closer to whiteness, or at least ally

⁷³ See Fantasia, Rick. 1988. *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*. Berkeley: University of California Press. This work discusses how people who participate in social movements do not always have pre-existing sensibilities about the movement or politics. Rather, it is through being engaged in collective action that people develop solidarity and class-consciousness.

themselves with a more historically economically and racially dominant society (Oboler 1995). Others choose to affirm Latin American and indigenous roots and resist official definitions imposed from above (such as by using the self-definition “La Raza,” literally meaning “the race” or “roots,” rather than the government-sanctioned term “Hispanic” used first in the 1980 U.S. Census). Tony prefers “Hispanic” because it derives from the Iberian Peninsula in Europe and is perceived as above other options.⁷⁴ Tony makes this choice because he understands the racial hierarchy to be based upon a “pigmentocracy.” Highlighting skin pigmentation as the key variable to racial worth, pigmentocracy is the idea that “miscegenation throughout the colonies, racial classifications, social status, and honor evolved into a hierarchical arrangement” (Oboler 1995: 21). In such a system, white skin denotes high status and honor whereas dark skin is associated with physical labor, conquered peoples, and slavery. Tony can claim “Hispanic” because of his light skin and Spanish descent. Tony’s ethnic/racial claim is incongruent with that of his father’s, who underscores his Native American and Aztec heritage, revealing the slightly less strident political era at the turn of the century compared to the 1960s, and the profound influence of his maternal grandparents.

Conclusion

Like thinned attachment families, cultural maintenance families are upwardly mobile and structurally assimilated into the U.S. mainstream. The difference is that they retain a high degree of cultural affiliation and identification with Mexico and a Mexican American community. Straight-line assimilation suggests that cultural assimilation is a

⁷⁴ The debate and contestation around the meaning and usage of various ethnic labels is discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Six.

gateway to other forms of assimilation, yet my research finds that upward mobility and a strong Mexican American identity are not mutually exclusive. Factors that lead toward a cultural maintenance trajectory include: endogamous marriage/partnerships, Spanish surnames, dark skin tone and non-European phenotype, Catholicism, traditional gender ideologies, strong family memory, and participation in Civil Rights activism.

I am not making a causal argument but am highlighting patterns of association. I argue that *different constellations of elements* lead to particular pathways of incorporation. There is no single causal mechanism leading to a trajectory; rather, there are *different constellations* of strong and weak elements that lead people to a particular pathway. While different elements combine to promote either thinned attachment or cultural maintenance, there are resemblances within those two categories that justify their distinctiveness. Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblances," as described by C. Jacob Hale (1998) is useful here:

Things within one category bear numerous resemblances to other things within that category, as well as to things in other categories. It need not be the case that all things within one category bear any one resemblance to each other; some resemblances may be taken as more important to category membership than others; some members of one category may be more paradigmatically located within that category than other members of the same category by virtue of possessing more of the more heavily weighted characteristics of resemblance; consequently, category boundaries are fuzzy. Borders between gender categories [and here I would add all categories], then, are zones of overlap, not lines. (Hale 1998: 323)

While I have fashioned "thinned attachment" and "cultural maintenance" models in order to demonstrate the two modes of racial incorporation and self-understandings that were most common, there is variation within these categories. In the spirit of "ideal types," these models are prototypical and used as exemplars of common trends. There is

a middle ground between the two trajectories detailed in the previous chapter and this one. Given that “cultural maintenance” and “thinned attachment” are prototypes and that I used two cases—the Montes/Rosenberg family and the Lopez family—to illustrate the ideal types, it is important to remember the internal variation possible. Thinking of “thinned attachment” and “cultural maintenance” as two ends of a continuum rather than discrete, dichotomous categories is useful.

More so than thinned attachment families, cultural maintenance families concerted “remember their roots.” Families do this by holding onto traditions, religion, cultural beliefs, and by preserving and transmitting family history. While these orientations certainly pre-existed the Civil Rights Movement, that period of heightened racial mobilization helped create the space for a cultural maintenance racial identity formation process. The Civil Rights Movement facilitated this cultural maintenance trajectory of racial incorporation into the United States by fostering an environment of multiculturalism and appreciation of diversity. Jere Takahashi elucidates the complex interplay between biography and historical context for Japanese Americans in the U.S.:

[Their] personal decisions and collective actions were made within specific historical contexts where economic and political forces, as well as cultural and ideological realities, were at play. ...As historical actors, their efforts to shape their destinies emerged from a complex of generational and racial processes and dynamics that intersected with their lives” (Takahashi 1997: 197).

As a result of the Civil Rights era, minority-oriented social networks blossomed; commitment to social justice and “cultural citizenship” (Flores and Benmayor 1997) strengthened; and multicultural ideologies burgeoned. Given this historical background, second generation Mexican Americans were empowered to embark upon a cultural maintenance pathway in a way that was more supported by society at large than ever

before. Cultural preservationist instincts could now be proclaimed and enacted more fully in the second and third generations than in earlier periods.

The intersection of history and biography produce profound effects. During the Civil Rights and affirmative action period racial and ethnic minorities have been empowered to proudly claim non-white racial identities. Only a generation earlier Americanization, deportation, and recruitment programs reigned, hampering ethnic pride possibilities. While not formative for all second generation Mexican Americans, it is in part due to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s that Mexican Americans in California in the new millennium can live out an upwardly mobile and cultural maintenance paradigm simultaneously.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM AND CONSOLIDATION OF IDENTITY

“Racism is like a Cadillac—
it changes models every year, but it’s still a Cadillac.”
-Ricky, 21-year-old male interviewee

“We should turn around and show we’re not what they think!”
-Beatrice, 60-year-old female interviewee

Discriminatory practices demarcate racial groups by establishing racial boundaries that exclude racial minorities from educational, workplace, or social arenas on the basis of their assumed inferiority. Discrimination erects boundaries to access at the entryway of valuable resources (school, employment, church, commercial zones, social groups), making the sustainability or permeability of racial boundaries a significant question. Discrimination is particularly deleterious in its capacity to instantiate a vision of the world for, as Pierre Bourdieu noted with regard to taste, “social divisions become principles of division, organizing the image of the social world” (Bourdieu 1984: 471). As people segregate themselves from “others” by way of discriminatory practices, they devise reproducible social categories. Gordon Allport defines prejudice as containing an “*attitude* of favor or disfavor...and it must be related to an overgeneralized (and therefore erroneous) *belief*” (Allport 1979: 13). Discrimination arises by denying individuals or groups equality of *treatment*. Herbert Blumer contends that discrimination is a matter of group position, not a set of feelings: “the locus of race prejudice is not in the area of individual feeling but in the definition of the respective positions of the racial groups”

(Blumer 1958: 5). A group status perspective finds that prejudice and discrimination are leveraged in order to secure a group status position (Bobo and Tuan 2006). Discrimination is operationalized here as attitudes, overgeneralized beliefs, and actions that are mobilized to cement superior group position relative to other groups.

This chapter examines the sites and modes and discrimination experienced by first, second, and third generation Mexican Americans, with special attention given to which types of discrimination are common across generations and which are distinctive. In work done on middle class blacks, Joe Feagin (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Sikes 1994), contends that racial discrimination in public places is an ongoing and major problem for the black community. While public opinion holds that racial discrimination has decreased dramatically in the post Civil Rights era, Feagin argues that racial discrimination continues to be a sizeable hurdle for blacks and that the public policy shift in focus toward the “underclass” (Wilson 1987) has eclipsed attention from the issue of racial discrimination. This chapter extends Feagin’s work by using Mexican Americans as a population beyond the black-white dichotomy, as well as elucidates further nuances of discrimination. This chapter addresses major questions including: What are the sites and forms of the discrimination Mexican Americans face? How does discriminatory action affect the victim’s sense of individual or group identity? In what ways is discrimination challenged or resisted? In what ways is it internalized? What are the generational differences in perception of discrimination and reactions, defenses, or coping mechanisms?

This chapter concerns the sites and modes of discrimination that are present in all three generations and those that are specific to particular generations. It also describes

how respondents react to discrimination. My argument in this chapter is three-fold. First, the sites and modes of discrimination that are universal across all three generations are based on general, non-personal elements (such as name and physical features) and enforce the positional relationship of the racial groups involved. Second, the discrimination that is specific to a particular generation is due to the families' pattern of upward mobility as well as to historical social movements that have prompted different types of consciousness. Third, reactions to discrimination have shifted dramatically through time because of each generation's unique relationship with the United States.

Common Discrimination Experiences Across Generation

Members of all three generations were targeted for discrimination based on specific non-personal features such as name, skin color, and physical appearance. All three generations were subjected to extra degrees of surveillance in public spaces, be it in retail stores by shop employees or in municipal zones by police officers.

Color-Coded & Labeled: The Impact of Skin Color & Names

Discrimination does not affect all Mexican Americans equally. Skin color has an enormous impact on how people are categorized and treated. As one interviewee quipped, "White is right; you were born wrong." Interviewees informed me that they learned at a young age that "lighter is better," and thus they tried to "wash off" their darkness or use facial medications to lighten their skin color. Skin color holds the possibility of "passing," of being perceived and treated as an uncontested part of the white majority. While debate continues as to whether Mexican Americans are a race or

an ethnic group—and if an ethnic group, whether they fall under white or black racial categories—privileges attendant with whiteness makes skin color a critical physical feature. Some Mexican Americans “pass”⁷⁵ as white, either intentionally or unintentionally⁷⁶. Light skin color offers an “ethnic option” (Waters 1990) of claiming whiteness. Conversely, some Mexican Americans of light skin color find themselves having to continuously assert their group membership or else it will go unrecognized.

The advantage of being light-skinned lies in being the beneficiary of some form of “white privilege,” at the very least obviating negative stereotypes to which darker-skinned individual are more quickly and more often subjected. Evelyn Morelos draws a tight link between skin color, beauty, and snap judgments:

I’ll tell you about prejudice. It’s not who you are and where you come from it’s how fair your skin is. You notice how if you’re fair and pretty, if you’re attractive, I don’t care what you are. It’s terrible, but that’s the way it is. ...I really feel that if you’re really dark-skinned, people judge you. Right then and there.

Tyler Mendoza explains how his light complexion was an advantage when it came to avoiding police stops and obtaining employment. When I asked him the intentionally broad question, “when you look in the mirror, what do you see?,” Tyler immediately honed in on the importance of his skin color to his social identity, as well as his gender and race:

⁷⁵ I write “pass” here with the understanding that Mexican Americans occupy an ambiguous and sometimes contradictory racial and ethnic position. According to modern-day racial categories, Mexican Americans are an ethnic group of any race. This contemporary understanding of how Mexican Americans are mapped racially and ethnically can be used to substantiate claims of belonging to the white race, making the notion of “passing” as white both non-sensical and potentially inflammatory.

⁷⁶ Some scholars consider this kind of “passing” as “taking the racial bribe,” meaning that minorities sell-out their political allegiance in favor of accepting racial benefits of whiteness. Guinier, Lani, and Gerald Torres. 2002. *The miner’s canary : enlisting race, resisting power, transforming democracy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Tyler: As a man. Light skinned man, a light skinned man,...Chicano/Latino man that has not earned the privilege but has received privilege because of my light eyes and my light skin.

JMV: And how does that receiving but not earning privilege work?

Tyler: [Friends of mine] get profiled by police and I don't. ...For instance, I'll go to a party when I was really, really, really, really young and people would just wave their hand and okay, I can come in but the people behind you have to check to see who they are. Of course, they were darker than me. ...[I] sometimes know that I've received a job over someone because of what I look like.

Tyler accurately discerned that he “has not earned the privilege but has received privilege” and he sees how unfairly rewards are distributed when he compares his experience with that of his darker skinned peers. He noted that someone “paid the price” and rather than be riddled with guilt at receiving this unrequested advantage, he would be committed “to make sure that door always stays open for someone behind [him].” Like Tyler, a number of light-skinned respondents claimed that they had escaped racism because they are assumed to be unquestionably white; a sub-set of those individuals remarked on being an insider-outsider positioned to hear derogatory comments made against Mexicans because the speaker wrongly correlated skin tone with ethnicity.

Both skin color and last name mark not only who gets perceived as Mexican American and who does not, but also who is more likely to self-identify as Mexican American. As Mary Waters (1990) notes with regard to middle class white ethnics in the United States, people often prioritize their last name in identification choice. Demonstrating the dominance of male lineage, sixty to seventy seven percent of her respondents gave preference for their father's as opposed to their mother's ancestry (Waters 1990: 33).⁷⁷ Both formal name and phenotype are markers of ethnic background

⁷⁷ My work is in agreement with Waters in that people often identify with their surname especially if others use it to label them and that physical looks also push identification unless such identification is deleterious.

and can be criteria upon which others judge the allocation of scarce resources. Contemporary research has found that names that signal a racial minority status can work against a job applicant in obtaining a job interview (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). In addition to her physical appearance, Samantha is well aware of the potential pitfalls of her ethnic-sounding last name, “Diaz.” Samantha, a third generation woman, has medium-olive skin, black hair, and is short of average height. She attended a majority white elementary school where she “thought that she was white” and it was in high school when she learned that others categorized her as Mexican. In answer to whether she felt her physical appearance had helped or barred her from gaining entrance to any social or occupational arena, she said:

I don't know if it's reality, but I feel like it's restricted me. I got the feeling that I'm jinxing myself or something, but when I tell people my last name, I wonder what reaction they're going to have. Because “Diaz” is very Mexican. ...When I'm talking to people or interviewing for things [jobs]...it's like I'm back in high school again and I have to pretend I'm white again.... The sad thing, in high school too, I wanted to be a lighter color. I actually put Clearasil on my face to get it a lighter skin tone. I thought that was pretty profound.... When interviewing, I know I probably could have gotten something higher, but I'm intimidated.

Here, Samantha packs in commentary about ethnic names, skin color, and internalized inferiority. While she never pointed out discrimination she faced directly, Samantha has perceived enough discrimination in the world that she knows the payoff there is to being perceived and treated as white. Due to comprehending the rewards that correspond to

That said, not everyone desires to hold onto their Mexican background. Some Mexican Americans were perfectly content to be perceived as European-descent white and offered no correction to that assumption, most likely in order to not disrupt the receipt of some forms of white privilege. This was the minority opinion in my sample, however, which could in fact speak to the fact that the vast majority of my respondent pool had Spanish surnames and were less able to escape being labeled by others as Latino. Furthermore, while it was never my intent to target Spanish surnamed individuals for my study, it is entirely possible that those with Spanish last names were more likely to respond to my recruitment efforts because they are more likely to see themselves as Mexican American due to the influence of their last name.

being white, she (or her parents) chose to associate her with white peers and heighten the chance of passing as white. Her surname and skin color have amounted to a mild psychological handicap and cause her to feel intimidated in job interviews and at work. She fears that her physical appearance and her ethnic-sounding name will saddle her with negative stereotypes by her potential employers. To overcome this, she is resolved to “prove” her worth through a combination of “walking on eggshells” and “working hard.” However, discrimination and negative stereotypes insidiously converted into a sense of inferiority and discouraged her from competing for promotions (“I know I probably could have gotten something higher, but I’m intimidated”). Racism does not have to be actively deployed in order to be effective—its ripple effects run far and wide beyond the point of initial impact.

Ruben and Adele Mendoza (parents to Tyler mentioned above) are both light skinned and have a Hispanic surname. Ruben and Adele were often perceived and treated as white if they did not disclose their surname. It was not their skin color but their last name—Mendoza—that restricted their access to housing:

Adele: We were looking for a place to live and we went apartment hunting. There was a small little cottage...we went to go look at—[it was] just perfect, what we had wanted. So we told the guy [property manager], “would you give a chance to go home and get the money and we’ll be back in an hour? And then we’ll come back and give you the deposit and the rent.” He was all, “oh, yeah, yeah, fine.” They had a formal book and so I put our names down on the register—“put you down so I’ll know when you come back.” When we came back they said, “Sorry, it’s already been rented.” And they slammed the door.

Ruben: We asked a couple of our friends to go and check out the apartment for us, “oh yeah, it’s still vacant.”

Adele: I mean, “Ruben Mendoza.” I mean, that is very obvious, who we are. [I]t’s a dead giveaway. ... What is the problem? Just because he thought we

were white—because we were white!!—but once we put the name down we are all-of-a-sudden these evil people.

The United States has a long history of housing segregation (Conley 1999; Massey and Denton 1993; Oliver and Shapiro 1995) and even now U.S. cities remain highly segregated. After being refused at the door by the property manager, the Mendozas confirmed the continued vacancy of the cottage and could not come up with an alternative explanation for having been refused besides the fact that they had written their last name, the “dead giveaway,” down on the register. The common sense understanding that names can be a disadvantage prompted another interviewee to change her Hispanic last name to a non-Spanish-sounding surname in order to avoid stereotypes.

The “Shopowner Tailgate”

Being closely supervised or “tailedgated” when shopping in retail stores was a common site and method of discrimination across all three generations. The obvious suspicion on the part of the store representative is that the middle class Mexican American intends not to purchase items but to steal them. A form of subtle harassment, what I dubbed as the “shopowner tailgate,” is not done even-handedly toward whites and minorities alike but is geared to surveil racial minority customers. Elena, an attractive olive-skinned professional woman who is forty-eight years old, explicitly states how shopkeepers link race and class when calculating which customers to watch with extra rigor:

I have enough money that if I want to buy a \$300 blouse I can buy one. ...I’ve seen other people in the store that look not even as dressed as well as I was dressed and *they’re* not followed around, but I am. So I think there’s still a stereotype-thing that’s going on with [people thinking] Latinos or Mexican people are thieves or ‘they-can’t-afford-to-be-here-why-are-they-even-here?’ kind of thing.

The “shopowner tailgate” can be a matter of a distrustful store clerk keeping an overly-watchful eye on customers or it can mean a retailer calling Immigration and Naturalization services and having customers deported. The responses to this discrimination can range from the self-censorship of “walking on eggshells,” to social action undertaken in response to a real or vicarious experience of discrimination.

Racial Profiling and “Cross Discrimination”

Negative stereotypes play into how police forces patrol minority and/or low-income communities. While these communities tend to have higher rates of incarceration, part of this is due to increased police presence in these areas as well as to the structural constraints that impoverish them in the first place. The authors of *Whitewashing Race* note how the “epidemiological” (150) approach to policing—police forces targeting their surveillance in areas inhabited by black and Latino populations—insures the higher probability of these youths being stopped by officers of the law, perpetuating a vicious cycle (Brown 2003). Harry Torres, the son of Mexican immigrants who was born in the U.S., shows how race and immigration status can become intertwined in the eyes of the Immigration and Naturalization Services, commonly referred to as “La Migra”:

JMV: When did you first realize there was something in the world called “race,” whether or not the concept was named at the time?

Harry: Very, very, very early. Before grade school we [he and his siblings] used to get stopped by La Migra all the time going to work. They’d make us go back and get our papers. They wouldn’t arrest us or nothing, but they’d make us go back and get our papers and we had to back and show it to them. Right here in Watsonville.

Here, “Mexican” and “immigrant” become one and the same as Harry and his siblings, all young United States citizens, are spotted as possible undocumented workers.

If “Mexican” doesn’t equate to “immigrant” in the eyes of police—who are frequently acting on prevalent stereotypes, but with an authority unmatched by laypersons—“Mexican” often equates to the assumption of “poor,” as demonstrated in the “shopowner tailgate.” Being labeled as poor has a totally different meaning if the accuser is a layperson versus if the accuser is a policeperson who has the power to pull over, detain, and question the accused.

What if Mexican Americans, deliberately or not, try to disrupt being perceived as Mexican American? Will the act of dissembling be effective protection against being racially profiled as Mexican American? While the answer requires more study and probably breaks down according to specific features of the situation, the experience of Pierre-Mecatl Ramirez, a third generation man, indicates that the answer is “no.” Pierre-Mecatl tells me how he feels he was racially profiled even though he was not “performing race” in stereotypical ways:

I went to a little park in downtown Sacramento, a nice little spot I like. I was looking up at the sky, feeling the grass, just kind of whatever, just being mopey [after a breakup with a girlfriend]. This cop comes up to me, just out of the blue, harassing me, asking me these questions about this piece of graffiti next to me that I haven’t even seen. ...This cop is talking to me about this piece of graffiti.... When I was a teenager, I affiliated with the Gothic subculture, so I was dressed in a velvet blazer and a bowler and this guy’s talking to me about this graffiti. “Well this is Mexican graffiti.” He’s looking around for my pen. ...I caught that he was basically saying, “This is Mexican gang graffiti and your last name is Ramirez.” Right, because he had my ID. I was like, “is anything you’re doing legal?” He gave me back my license and told me to get the fuck out of there.... If you can’t tell I’m not a gang member, based on what I’m wearing, what kind of training do you actually have? I’m wearing velvet. No cholos wear velvet. I mean, maybe I have a low-rider car, but....

JMV: In the moment, how did that make you feel?

Pierre-Mecat: I felt indignant. I guess the notion is that my rights were violated. But I was just basically pissed. A lot of people were like, “That’s just how it is.” Or, “the cops just need to make sure things are really safe.” I thought that was stupid, because he wasn’t doing that. He might have thought that’s what he was doing, but that means that his eyes were really clouded by some lenses that are named racism. (laugh)

JMV: And you came to that conclusion immediately or after some reflection?

Pierre-Mecat: I have some cousins who were cholos; I think that’s what I was being implicated as. And that it was on the basis of race. ...I fought neo-nazi skinheads for like four or five years before that. So I had a very heightened understanding that people saw me and they saw some brown kid. ...I’m certainly performing race in different ways, but at the time I was doing this little white kid subculture thing. I mean Goth is about whiteness, in really complicated ways. So I didn’t look like a cholo.

Even when Pierre-Mecat was not dressed in a typical cholo outfit—which serves to further demonstrate the diversity of ways one can “be” Mexican American—he was still pegged as Mexican American (complete with a negative stereotype of criminality) by both neo-nazi youth with whom he had confrontations earlier as well as the policeman in this excerpt. Social psychologist Erving Goffman envisioned social status or group association as something *performed*. Goffman articulated this “culture as practice” idea: “A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated” (Goffman 1959). The overarching point of Goffman’s book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, is that humans interact by way of “impression management” and that everyone, as social actors, is always attempting to “define” situations, or gain some control over them. While Goffman was theorizing social interactions, it is interesting to contemplate how his theory might translate to social categories such as sex, race, age, or nationality. Indeed, Judith Butler, following

Althusser, shows how bodies are produced through a dynamic of power and that the processes of hailing and interpellation applies to social categories such as sex and race. (Butler 1993; Butler 1995; Butler 1999). It is interesting, then, that even while Pierre-Mecatl performed a version of whiteness, a police officer re-assigned a racial label to him. This refusal of the officer to acquiesce to Pierre-Mecatl's racial performance does not invalidate it, but it does demonstrate the complexity of race as a category that is not wholly projected from within or ascribed from without but is created in a dynamic process, and varies according to social context (Okamura 1981).

While many respondents complained of negative stereotyping and racial profiling upon being perceived as Mexican American, others issued grievances after being discriminated against *as a different minority*. Joe Feagin notes the problem of “cross discrimination” (Feagin 1991: 111)—that is, how an ethnic or racial minority person may suffer from discrimination aimed at a different minority group by a person who is unable to distinguish one group from the other. This happened to a third-generation Mexican American adolescent male, Tom Acevedo. Tom is a slim young man who is dark skinned and has black hair and dark brown eyes. He is sometimes mistaken for Arab, the worst instance being when, some months after the September 11th terrorist attacks, he was stopped by a police officer when he was walking home from school. He recounted the incident that occurred when he was 13-years-old:

Tom: I got stopped because I was carrying a suitcase with my trumpet in it. I kinda looked like I was Arab—the cop said so. He pulled me over...and questioned me. ...And this is after September 11th, too, so they got a little more suspicious about that.

JV: What did you think was going on there? How did you react in that situation?

Tom: I believe he thought I had a bomb in my hands. [Laughs] But I told him that, “nah.” I asked him if he wanted to see what was in the box. He’s like, “yeah.” So, I opened up the suitcase...and I showed him the trumpet. Under it is where I keep all my oil and stuff and [I] let him look under there.... He’s like, “OK, I see.” I told him, “I’m not a terrorist or anything, sir, so don’t take me for that.”

JV: How did you respond to that internally?

Tom: That kind of freaked me out, because you know, most of my friends they do kind of look Arab but they are actually Mexican. It just freaked me out. He might think I actually have a gun and he might not trust [me]. He might take me to jail.... It would frighten me sometimes because *I didn’t want to get arrested for being Mexican.* [Laughs] [my emphasis]

As this incident illustrates, people of color can fall victim to misdirected racism or racial profiling. Tom attributed being targeted by the police as a consequence of looking Arab in combination with heightened efforts post-September 11th to rein in terrorist activity. His own comment that his friends “kind of look Arabic but they are actually Mexican” emphasizes the socially constructed quality of race. Since race is not a biological reality, it gains its force through the meanings people endow it and how people deploy it. Tom himself sees physical characteristics overlapping between Arabs and Mexicans and he has been victim of police mistaking which side of this blurry line he is on. His reaction to this racial profiling is to be fearful of the police force, scared of possible police over-reactions and being unjustly incarcerated. He realizes that he was (wrongfully) racially profiled as an Arab rather than as a Mexican American, but these technicalities are moot when being interrogated by an officer of the law.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ A number of third-generation Mexican American U.S. citizens reported being stopped and vigorously interrogated at the U.S.-Mexico border by U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Services officials who presumed they were Mexican nationals.

Variable Discrimination Experiences Across Generation

Participants in the Civil Rights Movement developed a heightened consciousness about racism, making these second generation individuals quicker to point out disparities than the elder generation. This period effect conditions the perception of racism among members of the second generation. Beyond historical movements, some types of discrimination are specific to generation, such as discrimination around home ownership and spatial mobility, both of which occur in the second and third generation. The phenomena of home ownership and residential mobility are evidence of economic upward mobility, a trend occurring in the latter generations that places them in new social contexts and exposes them to new forms of prejudice.

The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement

Perception of discrimination is influenced by generation. Activism during the Civil Rights Movement in general, and the Chicano Movement⁷⁹ in particular, is one bond that some members of the second generation share, an experience that continues to influence their socio-political perspective. Many second generation Mexican Americans in my sample were directly involved in the Chicano Movement. Those who were not activists were aware of the Movement and its social agenda. Indeed, those who were social activists in the '60s reported to me their unwavering ethnic title of "Chicano/a," over and above other options like "Mexican American," "Mexican," or "Latino/a," because of the

⁷⁹ The Chicano Movement (late 1960s to early 1970s) arose within the context of widespread social mobilization, spearheaded principally by the black struggle for civil rights. The thrust of the Chicano Movement was to agitate for equal citizenship and civil rights not only on paper, but also in legal and everyday practice. Chicanos imported lessons on anti-colonial protest tactics and organizing strategies from the Black Power movement, as well as, to a lesser extent, campus radicalism and student strikes from the Free Speech Movement occurring at the University of California, Berkeley. Haney-Lopez, Ian. 2003. *Racism on Trial: the Chicano Fight for Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

political implications of self-determination that the term “Chicano/a” implies. One man explained his rationale for maintaining his title “Chicano” decades after the Movement: “It’s political. It’s a thing where there’s no difference between you guys and us guys. In those days [‘68 to ‘72], Chicano was one that was more politically active...we would work with the huelga [strike] and we picketed and we went to march to Sacramento a couple times....” Scholars have long noted the importance of self determination in recouping a marginalized identity (Carmichael and Hamilton 1992; Collins 1991; Fanon 1963; Fanon 1967). In keeping with the spirit of self determination, activists from the Chicano Movement retained the politically forceful and self-devised ethnic label “Chicano/a” and oftentimes taught their children the importance of this label as well as the agenda of social justice and representation that it embodies.

One of the goals of the Chicano Movement was to move Chicanos (Mexican Americans born in the United States) from the periphery to the center of the United States collective consciousness. Mexican Americans had long felt treated as second-class citizens and part of the agenda of the Chicano Movement was to uncover the ways in which Mexican Americans were systematically denied equal access to opportunity and resources. Since the outlawing of Jim Crow segregation that was prevalent throughout the U.S. southern states, discrimination against blacks and browns alike was forced to go underground. In practical terms, this spelled the disappearance of “white” and “colored” signs above bathrooms and water fountains and their replacement with “structured racism” or “color-blind racism.” As Andrew Barlow explains: “Unlike the racisms of previous epochs, such as the system of state power called Jim Crow racism, white privileges in the 1950s and 1960s became structured into the patterns of interaction in

society so deeply that the overt defense of racial privileges became unnecessary” (Barlow 2003: 31).

Racism post-1960s was no longer overt but covert. Activists in the Chicano Movement possessed a heightened awareness of racial inequalities and an understanding about how racism came to be embedded in institutions. The social consciousness cultivated during the Chicano Movement stayed with those second generation Mexican American participants and groomed them to be quick to discern institutional discrimination. Former activists tended to pass on their knowledge and consciousness to their children, thereby creating a third generation of Mexican Americans who were primed to decry social inequities based on race. Believing in civic participation as a means of representation, some Chicano Movement activists started organizations dedicated to Mexican American causes while others opted to work within already established organizations and be an advocate for Mexican Americans from within those pre-existing associations.

Rafael Treviño, who established a parent and child wellness health care program in Santa Barbara, credits the Chicano Movement for his career motivation. As other Civil Rights activists testify, the Chicano Movement helped unveil racism as not just interpersonal but also institutional. As a Latino outreach worker in the health services in the 1960s, Rafael began to see that Latinos were not utilizing the system because they were “alienated;” there were no Latinos in the system and few recruitment efforts targeting the Latino community. Rafael reflects on his awareness of institutionalized racism that burgeoned during the Chicano Movement:

It wasn't the kind of racism that says, "hey, you have a darker skin than I do so you're inferior to me." Which is what I always thought racism was. But then I became to see that there is this institutionalized racism. This very subtle racism where they're not going to come out and tell you that they don't like you because you're not white. But they're going to let you know in a different way and it's up to you to find out what that way is because it's very hidden.

As did others advocating self-determination before him, Rafael concluded that to set up a health care organization devoted to a Latino clientele⁸⁰ would be the best way to fulfill the needs of that underserved population. Rafael explains how uncovering institutionalized racism was the catalyst for creating a Latino health organization:

[People ask me,] 'Why do your people need to have a different approach to using services? Why do we have to go through all this outreach and all this hoopla to get people to use our services? Why don't they just use it?' Well, that's because this individual assumes that everybody gets the same type of education, had the same type of upbringing and background that they do.

JMV: What was your strategy?

Rafael: ...[Malcolm X's] idea was to become independent. Start your own farms, start your own restaurants, start your own banks, start your own everything. That's where we came up with the idea of starting our own non-profit organization. So that's why we formed this organization—on the basis that we would become independent. That we would become our own employer, we would employ our own people, we would employ our own advocates.

The answer to institutional racism, for Rafael, was to construct an independent organization serving Latino needs, in the spirit of self-determination.

Other second generation Mexican Americans whose consciousness was raised by the Chicano Movement worked within already established institutions in order to achieve visibility. Raymond Talavera, a businessman and community leader in Santa Barbara, is frustrated by society's "judging a book by its cover" mentality that discounts Mexican

⁸⁰ In the years since its establishment, the health care organization Rafael founded has increasingly served the non-Latino community of Santa Barbara as well.

Americans in the professional world and society at large. He attempts to make change by working from within white-dominated organizations and institutions. Raymond counters marginalization not with immediate rebuttals but by becoming active in civic organizations.

You knock your head against the system long enough you learn...that the system ain't really gonna change, you just gotta get in it and deal from within. ...I noticed when I became a board member at the college, there is a big difference sitting on this end of the table as opposed to sitting in the audience. You are now *influencing* decisions that are made that affect the people out there. ...More than anything else, you can influence a vote as a voting member at the table. If we are not at the table then forget it. We can yell and scream and march as long as we want, and yeah you get some immediate impact and stuff, but in the long haul we have to be *at the table*, part of the table, part of the council, part of the district board, part of the this board, part of that board. It does make a difference. A lot of times issues do come up where you have a say, you have a vote, but you can also influence your fellow board members by making the argument as to why you should vote this way and not that way. So, yeah, a lot of times you win, you lose, but you are in the game, you aren't in the stands. You are actually playing the game.

Raymond sees "the system" as flawed and wants to work to correct it by becoming politically engaged and enacting changes from inside civic organizations.

Rafael and Raymond represent two primary reactions to having one's consciousness raised during the Civil Rights movement. While these excerpts show the ramifications to be oriented toward civic life, indeed, repercussions of heightened awareness of race as a result of the Civil Rights era were also evident in family life. For example, one former Brown Beret⁸¹ whose eighty-four year old father told me that he had

⁸¹ The Brown Berets were the militant vanguard of the Chicano Movement. The Brown Berets claimed a brown (non-white) identity, their pledge reading: "I wear the Brown Beret because it signified my dignity and pride in the color of my skin and race." They protested injustices (especially police brutality) through mass mobilization and militant street action, declaring they would fight for Mexicans "by all means necessary." By 1970, the Brown Berets had over sixty chapters throughout the Southwest. Haney-Lopez, Ian. 2003. *Racism on Trial: the Chicano Fight for Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

never experienced discrimination corrected his father's assertion in a later conversation with me wherein he indicated that his father, as a Mexican immigrant toiling in the fields alongside other Mexican immigrants, just did not realize the discrimination he was undergoing.

The Importance of Home Ownership

Given the economic upward mobility of the families, it is not until the second generation when a number of them were able to purchase family homes. While the immigrant generation generally experiences some economic success through hard work, it is usually the second generation that secures occupations with good compensation packages, gains a financial foothold, and is able to buy a house. This places the second generation in a new occupational arena, income bracket, and neighborhood. Home ownership has long been considered the gateway to the middle class, yet Mexican American prospective buyers have confronted numerous barriers to entry, from the practice of racial steering to restrictive covenants. Recall how Ruben and Adele Mendoza, interested in renting a cottage, were blockaded by the property manager upon learning their surname and inferring their racial background.

Home ownership is an asset that has historically been boasted disproportionately by whites. Even today, U.S. cities remain highly segregated (Massey and Denton 1993). Indeed, a number of my homeowner respondents reported that their new neighbors were either disgruntled by their move into the neighborhood or openly questioned the legality of their source of income. Yolanda Segura and her family live in a large Victorian home atop a hill in Hayward, with a view of the San Mateo Bridge and the San Francisco Bay.

Yolanda mentions how they were the first non-European descent white family to move into the exclusive neighborhood:

[W]hen we moved here to this house, I think some of the neighbors kind of looked at us like, “who are these people?!” And I remember my husband used to say “Oh, I’m sure they think we’re drug lords.” Because how could people like us afford a place like this? ... There is certainly that feeling of “how did you guys get to where you’re at?” But, they don’t know us and they didn’t know what we had to go through at first to get to this point. So I think just in general there is this assumption that Latinos are not usually successful.

In that same vein, Guillermo Ramirez, second generation like Yolanda, spoke of his neighbors’ incredulity over his purchase of his two story Mexican colonial house in San Jose. The neighbors wanted to know how he could afford to live in the upper-class neighborhood. He quipped to the neighborhood go-between: “You just tell them, I pay my mortgage payment just like they pay theirs.”

Second generation Mexican Americans confront these questions of class and legitimacy in a way their parents’ did not because the first generation had different financial resources and objectives.⁸² In fact, as the second generation realizes the importance of home ownership to solidify middle class status, they impress upon their children the significance of buying a home for themselves. As the second generation learned from their parents aspiring toward the American Dream and as they instruct their children, a keystone of middle class success is homeownership.

| *The Importance of Geography and Demographics*

⁸² The same argument holds true for white-collar occupations which most families attained at the second generation. This theme of workforce mobility is explored in a separate chapter.

Second and third generation Mexican Americans are more likely to live in non-Mexican majority communities than their predecessors. They are prone to have educational and work experiences that take them outside of California and into contexts where they are not only an ethnic minority group but a numerical minority group as well. Irrespective of generation in the United States, geographic surroundings and social context bears on the formation of racial identity. Immigrant generations often follow social networks or established immigration routes that lead them to settle in ethnic enclaves or communities with a high proportion of residents of the same ethnic group. While immigrant social networks are not always beneficial for newcomers (Menjívar 2000), homogeneity of community may in fact lead to a kind of protective effect for its residents. If immigrants are surrounded by people in similar social positions vis-à-vis immigration status and race, they may be less likely to experience discrimination. Indeed, this could be one factor influencing the immigrant generation to declare that they had never experienced racial discrimination. The second and third generations who resided in majority white environments were frequently in a numerical minority position, navigating the advantages and disadvantages of that social placement. Namely, these later generations had to determine how they fit into and related to their virtually all-white environment, or “white habitus” (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Homogenous social contexts limit subjection to incidents of public discrimination. If people live in neighborhoods with a majority Mexican American population, they are less likely to experience discrimination because they live in a pocket of co-ethnics who share many commonalities and literally “look like” them. Reyna Madrigal, a third generation woman who grew up in a predominately Mexican area of Whittier remarked:

When I took Chicano studies, that is when I realized “Wow, I’m Mexican.”

JMV: Really?

Reyna: Yeah, I think because living here there was...probably 80% Mexicans that went to my high school so I never thought about other races and I didn’t think I was [an] under-represented group. I didn’t know about discrimination because I didn’t face any living here. There was Mexican markets, Mexican products. Or when I went to Cal-State Fullerton, Orange County, then it was like a big culture clash. ... There’s not that many people here that look [like] me.

Reyna did not realize difference until she moved out of her majority-Mexican hometown and into a more racially diverse environment. Racial homogeneity buffered her from discrimination.

The downside of living amongst a large number of Mexican Americans is intra-group tension as some volley for status as more “authentic” than others. One respondent called this the “super-Chicano” phenomenon. Elements of this so-called authenticity include Spanish language fluency, cultural competency, skin color or other physical features, clothing and behavior. I will deal with the question of intra-Mexican contention and authenticity in Chapter Six.

Those who lived in a social context where Mexican Americans were a numerical minority were often buffered from discrimination, as noted above, and sometimes were immersed in a predominately white environment. Sometimes, but not always, residing in a “white habitus” prompts the adoption of a non-Hispanic white identity, particularly if no one points out difference. Whether one thinks of one’s self as non-Hispanic white or Mexican American in one’s location of origin, when one moves to a location where there is a *relative loss* of racial diversity, people either discover their Mexican background or

be stimulated to self consciously represent it. Recognizing one's minority status due to a change in demographics can bring on frustration with one's newfound relative invisibility. The cognitive shift to re-think one's self based on a new set of demographics was reported exclusively in cases where people moved from a racially heterogeneous environment to one that was *less* diverse. Just because one "passed"⁸³ as European-descent white in mixed surroundings does not mean one will be able to pass equally effectively in a predominantly white environment.⁸⁴ People who realized their racial disparity based on moving to a less diverse location became frustrated with a lack of minority or mixed-race peers. This angst over lack of community and their newfound invisibility gets converted into active representation of Mexican Americans in attempt to educate one's peers or community and argue for one's "cultural citizenship" (Flores and Benmayor 1997) based on being Mexican American, not non-Hispanic white.

Daniel Zagada, a third generation man from the San Francisco East Bay, was enthusiastic about representing Mexican Americans in conversation with his peers in college on the East Coast. Geographic location and demographics played a role in Daniel feeling pressure to articulate perspectives he felt were lost on the East Coast, a place that lacked the Mexican history of California. Daniel comments on the impact of geography on his need to self-consciously represent his background:

When I went back east, not only was that the first time that I felt as Mexican as I was, it was also the time I wanted to be because I felt the responsibility to represent that in the face of not seeing too much of it around me. Sort of my

⁸³ I put "passing" in quotations to signal the paradox of suggesting that Latinos—who have variously been categorized on the U.S. Census as being a "race" or an "ethnicity" (in which case one can also be of any "race") depending on the time period—may not *already* be considered de facto "white." This debate over categorization belies biological arguments of race and reveals the social constructed nature of racial categories.

⁸⁴ The people who reported "passing" were in fact those with lighter skin and more European appearing physical features.

responsibility to—all right the rest of you guys are white here—I better show you what we’re all about.... I was just cognizant of the fact that I’m representing my group so I’m going to behave this way.

JMV: Were there certain ways in which you behaved or issues—

Daniel: ...It was more like in conversation with friends I would represent certain view points that were left out in conversations. The same thing happened in our law school classes.... I would always try to bring in certain issues that people were leaving out that did deal with race and things like that. ...Where the opportunity was right, I would try to do that because I felt a certain responsibility to do that. And again, it came in the face of being in that sort of foreign environment.

Moving from California to a part of the country that is less populated by Mexican Americans incited Daniel to educate his peers about racial issues that were unspoken. By virtue of being politically sensitive in a new geographic region where Mexican American concerns are not popular, Daniel became a delegate for Mexican American issues. Whether or not others may have perceived him as Mexican American and expected him to represent a particular racial viewpoint, Daniel spontaneously felt it incumbent upon him to vocalize issues around race. Daniel’s act of social representation is spurred by his belief of his civic responsibility to his racial group as well as to wider American society.

Geography and demographics contribute to racial identity formation. While homogenous social contexts limit subjection to incidents of public discrimination, they are also fertile grounds for battles over authenticity among sub-groups of the Mexican American population. Further, a change of social context that renders one a numerical minority can spawn frustration that can lead to racial representation in hopes of heightening awareness and visibility. Others in this situation, on the other hand, choose to “pass” as non-Hispanic white.

Resistances to Discrimination Experiences Across Generation

Generation in the United States plays an important role in how Mexican Americans perceive and respond to discrimination. Each generation patterns unique ways of responding to discrimination that reflects its own distinctive relationship to the U.S.: first generation immigrants from Mexico, no matter their tenure in the United States, opt to avoid uneasy situations whereas second and third generation Mexican Americans are inclined to struggle for social equity. This generational difference is a result of myriad factors, including the sense of permanence, the post-Civil Rights era awareness, heightened education, and English-language ability that later U.S.-born generations tend to possess.

Two generation-specific influences contribute to my respondents' socio-political consciousness: first is their generation in the United States and second is their historical frame of reference, that is, the historical periods through which they have lived or been active in that helped shape their awareness. Reactions to discrimination in the second and third generations are predicated upon a belief in permanent residence and citizenship (Flores and Benmayor 1997; Sanchez 1993) whereas the immigrant generation relies on a "dual frame of reference" (Ogbu 1990; Ogbu 1994) and is disinclined to criticize their adopted country. The second and third generation possesses a post-Civil Rights language and assertiveness that is due to their historical frame of reference. This finding is especially true for those second generation Mexican Americans who participated in the Chicano Movement, as well as their children. This is in line with Karl Mannheim's theorization of generations, that is, that their similarity of temporal location makes generations subject to common dominant social, intellectual, and political circumstances (Mannheim 1936). Mannheim defines generations as sharing a "particular kind of

identity of location, embracing related ‘age groups’ embedded in a historical-social process” (292). Mannheim further specifies various kinds of bonds between generations, allowing for an affinity between group members based on social location, political leanings, and geographical proximity that produce a particular consciousness. Third generation Mexican Americans are confident about their identity as American citizens, leading them to quickly stand up for their rights when they have been infringed upon.

Not Quite Resistance: Social Phobia and Self-Questioning

Ramona Vargas, a first generation seventy-seven year old widow who has spent the last fifty-two years in the United States, is the mother of Elena. She and her late husband worked hard in low-paying jobs (she in a cannery, a packing house, and housekeeping) in order to achieve, and then cling to, their middle class status. Ramona, who struck me as a mild and gentle woman, told me how she felt discriminated against in church because no one would sit near her and her husband:

Where we used to go to church we noticed that some American people, if the bench was empty—it was just us—they see us there and they just look for another place to sit down. You notice all those things.... It was just my husband and me. We sit there and the whole bench was empty: just the two of us in one end and they just see us there and just keep going and look for other places [to sit]. Even if it was *crowded*, still they wouldn’t sit there.

Ramona was clearly still agitated by these social slights which whittled away at her self confidence. She explained that she and her husband decided to stop going to church because they felt unwanted there. The church ended up hiring a “Spanish priest”: “They have an American one [priest] and a Mexican one [priest]. Now I just go to the Mexican service, that’s much better.” She solved the dilemma of how to continue her church-

going without enduring social slights by self-segregating and attending the Spanish/Mexican mass.

Ramona is firm in her philosophy of equality, as she utilized religious language to adamantly inform me, “God made me and made them so there shouldn’t be any difference!” Still, her own convictions of equality do not match up with the social reality she experiences. So, when push comes to shove in racial matches, she declines being a contestant and leaves the situation. She attended a senior center a few times where a similar situation of racial avoidance and discomfort ensued, prompting her to duck out of senior center activities:

They weren’t friendly at all. You expect me to come over here? So I just stopped going. I said, “No, I’d feel worse if I come over here and see those faces [she turns up her face and looks away]. I’d rather stay home.”

She [her daughter] said, “Well, after maybe they get to know you and all that....”

I say, “Yeah, but I’m gonna suffer before they get to know me.”

Ramona determined that these social slights were racially motivated due to the bounty of similar treatment by white Americans she has received. The hope that people will realize the kind character beneath her Mexican-ness will be destructive in the meantime (“I’m gonna suffer before they get to know me.”). She makes the rational choice to remove herself from potentially damaging situations, a tendency which has grown into a more generalized agoraphobia over time.

Elena Vargas, Ramona’s daughter and a health care professional, lives in the Napa region. Elena, who experienced the 1960s Civil Rights era as a young teenager, is more versed in the language of identity politics and race relations than is her mother. She was also able to achieve a higher occupational standing than her mother due to her higher

educational level and her bilingual skills. The discrimination she points to is subtler than refusal to sit next to her in public, such as her mother endured, but is equally insidious. Discrimination, for her, is abundant in the workplace where her white colleagues render her, her skills, and even the money she controls, invisible. Elena has attained a middle-class occupation and income, and yet equality with her white peers is elusive. She complains of how difficult it is to have her professional voice heard, how she feels it is overridden or neglected on the job. Elena illustrates her point:

I'm working with a lot of other health agencies and a lot of times...I wonder, I really wonder, is it that people don't really listen because I'm Latina, or is it because there's another issue? What would the other issue be? ...I just had another person in my office go to one of these meetings and I said, "tell me if you see this going on: I'll say something, even real positive things like 'I have a thousand dollars that I want to spend on an obesity program and I hear you all saying that you have some projects that you want to do. Well, let me help you.' Then somebody else will talk about something else and they'll go, 'well, I really don't know...we need to get some money.'" [She laughs]

Indeed, Elena's co-worker witnessed this dynamic at the meeting: "Yeah! I saw that. You would say something and they wouldn't hear it until somebody else said it." Elena attributes this professional invisibility to her race:

I'm thinking cuz they're white. ...It's not like I'm new. I've been in the community for 25 years, I've been on Nutrition Council for 20 of those years, so what is it? Is it the Good Ol' Girls System still—just like there's a Good Ol' Guys System? Why are they not listening? Am I being too aggressive? Am I not being aggressive enough? Is it because I do not have a Master's Degree behind me—it could be education?

Elena goes through a self-questioning process in order to see if the lack of respect she faces in meetings could be a result of something else, a taxing process of "careful evaluation" (103) that Feagin found among his black interviewees.

Ideological Resistances:

◇ *“It’s your problem” and the Use of Logic*

One way to unravel discrimination is to locate the problem or pathology of discrimination with the perpetrator rather than the victim. Logic plays a key role in disarming acts of prejudice. Beatrice Madrigal, a sixty year old second-generation Mexican American woman, works as a campus monitor at an elementary school in Los Angeles. She wears a very “It’s your problem” attitude when it comes to discrimination and “doesn’t let it bother her.” As a schoolyard monitor, she tries to be a mentor to the young kids who are often battling on the playground with race-talk. She adheres to the principle that “we’re all the same” and says to children, to illustrate her point, “you peel off your skin—but, don’t do it!—and I’ll peel off mine and you’ll see that we’re both the same underneath.” Beatrice argues against racism by dismantling biological claims to racial difference. Indeed, biologically-based insults are still lodged on schoolyards today, as she tells me that one Asian boy called a Mexican American girl “a monkey,” referring to her dark skin and hairy arms. Beatrice refereed the verbal tussle by addressing the girl: “are you a monkey?” The girl responds with a firm “no.” Beatrice then comforts her with this use of logic: “See, then don’t worry about it, you’re not a monkey!”

Beatrice continues to use logic to crumble racist thought as she touches on racial epithets and name-calling:

Even though they say, “dirty Mexicans” or “you bean eater,” it doesn’t bother me. If you were to say, “Oh you know what? You’re just a bean eater,” I say, “think what you like! I eat beans, yes!” ...I’m a Mexican and there’s nothing a I can do about it and I accept it and if they don’t like it, well then that’s their problem. But

it doesn't hurt me. I think at one time, growing up, that word "bean eater" did bother me, but to me it was *just a word*.

They do that at school too [where she works]. They say, "bean eater." I say, "why? That's just a word." I tell the little girl, "don't you eat beans?" She goes, "yeah." "Well then we are bean-eaters, right?" She goes, "yes." I kind of joke with them because I don't want them to take offense at "bean eater." I say, "he eats rice! [Referring to the Asian boy who had called her a "bean eater.]" Why don't you call him a "rice eater?" I said, "don't you eat rice?" Cuz he's a little Oriental. He goes, "yeah." "Well, then you're a rice eater. Is that any different?" He goes, "no." "So then why do we do this?"

Logic is Beatrice's armor against racism. She uses logic to diffuse racial insults, trying to show the elementary schoolchildren she supervises that racism is the problem of the aggressor. She tries to take the sting out of politicized words such as "bean eater" by showing that on a basic level, words are "just words" and if a "bean eater" really just refers to someone who eats beans then such statements of fact that should not be injurious.

Beatrice, as a sizeable number of other respondents said with regard to interpersonal discrimination, says that she doesn't take discrimination seriously. She credits her mother and father with instilling her with an "oh, who cares?" attitude, an attitude she says stems from contentment with her own life first and foremost and one she has concertedly tried to inculcate in her children. Beatrice informs me:

When I hear that, "Oh, you Mexican!" I think, "who cares? I don't care what you think. I like being a Mexican." ...I am who I am and their name-calling isn't going to change it. "You got the problem, you deal with it because I don't have no problem with who I am." I always tell the kids: "Look what I'm saying. Do I have a problem with it? No. Is it going to bother me? No. I am not going to go over there and cry[.]" You have to do the same thing. I pass that on to them.

Beatrice vacillates from unraveling the discriminatory act with logic, as she does for schoolchildren at her work, to writing the aggressor of discrimination off as "ignorant"

and therefore “not caring” and not letting the action bother her. Beatrice’s notion of “who cares?” is echoed by the voice of Moises Ramos, a third-generation male: “I just worry about myself and make the best and be the best that I can be. Kind of like ‘I don’t give a fuck’ kind of attitude.... But just the attitude of ‘who cares what others think of me’ and that’s not going to stop me from doing what I need to do to achieve me goals that I need to achieve.” In these excerpts, a calculated insouciance and fortitude are levied as disarming devices for racism.

Similarly, Ismael, a fifty-nine year old second generation male who goes by “Milo,” recalls when he was dating a Swedish woman in high school and how her father was a racist. Milo felt “that little sting” when he was told by his girlfriend’s mother that it would be best if he weren’t there when the father got home. Milo remarks how the racist father of his girlfriend was “ignorant” yet he quickly follows up that “it’s your problem”-type response with a justification for why he should be treated with respect. A lawyer in Ventura, Milo explains:

I was okay with it because I just felt the guy was ignorant. He was a blue-collar welder who didn’t know better. I had no need for his approval. I’m sure I’m not what he’s used to. I’m sure he never went to what is now my office and met with a brown face that is his lawyer who is going to save his ass, who happened to be a Mexican. I’m sure he’d never experienced that. Had he ever experienced that then maybe he wouldn’t have felt that way.

Milo sees racist beliefs as ignorant and uninformed, thus preventing him from feeling belittled in any significant way. Viewing racist ideology as ignorant is defensive armor against discrimination, yet even so, Milo follows up these assertions with the idea that he deserves to be respected due to having proven himself in his occupation as a lawyer. Even after writing racist beliefs off as “ignorance” and rejecting a need for “approval,” he

moves to show himself as an exception (“I’m sure I’m not what he’s used to.”) because of his success in a vocation that could potentially put the former girlfriend’s father’s legal fate in his hands. By highlighting his vocational capabilities, Milo rationalizes his positive self-image even beyond refuting racism as a folly of ignorance.

The third generation follows the pathway that the second generation carved of deflecting racism by repositioning the pathology of discrimination with its producer rather than its receiver. While the immigrant generation was overwhelmingly reluctant to recount instances of discrimination, their descendents were firmly rooted in the U.S. and succeeded the Civil Rights Movement, giving them the confidence and voice needed to call out discrimination as illogical, unfair, and a deficiency on the part of the aggressor.

◇Racial Pride as Protection

Many Mexican Americans articulated racial pride, most often in the second and third generations. Pride acts as a preventative defense mechanism against nefarious consequences of discrimination. In particular, interviewees mentioned this need for pride as a tenet taught to them by their parents. Feagin (1994) notes the role parents play in socializing their children regarding racism. When racial pride is relayed from parents to children, pride is intended to augment self-esteem and ward off the potentially damaging consequences of discrimination.

While two older immigrants claim to be very “patriotic” toward Mexico, on the whole, the immigrant generation is less inclined to be proud of their Mexican heritage than later generations. Remembering the reasons they left Mexico, they are more inclined to be grateful for their new position in the U.S., posed to take advantage of relative opportunity. Given their “dual frame of reference” as immigrants, they were

appreciative of being in the so-called “land of opportunity” and looked forward to a relative upward adjustment of their lifestyle (Hochschild 1995). Indeed, a couple first generation immigrants denied ever being discriminated against—even when their children claimed that they had indeed suffered racist treatment. Again, this points to generational awareness of racism as well as a readiness to critique one’s country of residence.

The second generation possessed a kind of “double consciousness” (DuBois 1903) with regard to their racial background. They were cognizant of their families’ feeling about their race (be it pride, insouciance, or embarrassment) as well as society’s feeling toward their race (largely disparaging). Navigating those various modes of sentiment can be tricky. The majority of second generation Mexican Americans pronounced pride in their background, saying it was either instilled by their parents or acquired in compensation for a personal experience of devaluation. Mannheim accounts for such fractures within generations. Mannheim makes a distinction between an “actual generation,” that is, youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems, and the more substantial bond of a “generation unit,” groups within the same actual generation that have “an identity of responses, a certain affinity in the way in which all move with and are formed by their common experiences” (Mannheim 1936: 306). An actual generation can therefore boast a number of differentiated, polar forms of generation units that display antagonistic intellectual and social responses to identical environmental stimuli.

Mannheim’s theory clarifies how second and third generation Mexican Americans can be alternately proud and embarrassed. Racial pride is often credited to parental

teachings, some of which are laced with a staunchness about the underbelly of racism and an encouragement for preparedness and fortitude. A common motivation for pride is expressed here:

My mother...said to me, "Look, you're Latino—or, you're Mexican—and you should be proud of it. No one is any better than you, just like you are not any better than anyone else. You are equal to everyone. And you just have to stand by your ground." And that made me understand that if I was going to be confronted with racism there was nothing I had to be ashamed about, just to be strong, that's all.

The philosophy of equality is always advanced in statements of pride. The emphasis on equality is utilized to elevate people who occupy a mid-to-low position on the racial hierarchy. People are intensely aware of the reality of the racial hierarchy and sometimes use humor in order to both raise their group position in their own mind and in the mind of their interlocutor. Lance Morelos takes his mother's teaching one step further by using humor to call into question the extant racial hierarchy:

My mom used to say, "...Nobody is better than anybody else. And you remember that." I used to say, "Mexican? Oh, the upper-echelon?" I used to say that all the time when I was in high school and college. "Mexican? Oh, the upper-echelon?" And it used to kind of off-set people. Because if people saw that you were proud of your heritage, they'd let you alone.

By problematizing the placement of Mexican Americans as somewhere other than the "upper-echelon" of the racial hierarchy, Lance points out the cunning presence and divisive power of the racial hierarchy.

Not all members of the second and third generations are stalwart in their racial pride. Some, like third generation Amalia Ruiz, were embarrassed. Unflattering self-perceptions are also passed down from one generation to the next:

[I think that my grandparents and my dad] thought of themselves as second-class citizens because we were Mexican.... I think they internalized some of the

discrimination that they experienced, as older generation Mexicans. So they never taught me to be proud to be a Mexican. ...On a more conscious level I got from them that it's kind of shameful to be Mexican. I hate to say that.

Abashed and devoid of racial strongholds, Amalia doesn't have the familial or societal resources to curry up racial pride.

The possession of racial pride sometimes converts into active representation of Mexican Americans in civic organizations. On the other hand, racial insecurity leads to blending in with mainstream culture to the greatest degree possible. While pride was more prevalent than embarrassment, as shown, fractures exist within the second and third generations, demonstrating that orientation to racial heritage is not over-determined by generation.

◇Asserting Demands for Equality as Citizens

Two types of responses to the “shopowner tailgate” variety of racial discrimination prevail: 1) to be intimidated and cautiously watch one's actions or 2) to be frustrated, followed by social action of representation or boycotting. Samantha Diaz, described earlier, remarks: “I go into stores and people look at me like I'm going to steal something. I just get that feeling constantly. Like I have to be walking on eggshells. Even to this day I still get that feeling.” Her response to this racial stereotyping and discrimination is to bend to the intimidation by censoring her actions—“walking on eggshells”—so as not to call attention to herself.

The other common response to retail-related discrimination is frustration that transforms into various demands for equal treatment. Marisol Fuentes, a middle class third-generation Mexican American young woman, recounted a time when she was 14-

years-old and shopping at a “knick-knack” store with her mother. She was trying on barrettes when she overheard the store clerk telling her mother that she was not allowed to put on the hair accessories. Marisol interpreted this incident as overtly about race:

[The store clerk told my mother that] you’re not allowed to put those [barrettes] in your hair when a couple of minutes before there was a white lady and her white daughter there trying on the same things and nobody told them anything. [M]y mom was like “Well, why? Why aren’t we allowed to? If you guys didn’t want [customers to touch items], than there should be a sign out here.”

...I guess in a way she [the store clerk] was calling [us] dirty or something. My mom told her that we washed our hair...and I just got really, really upset.... I got really mad and I was like, “Where’s your manager?” ...The manager was the same way...saying, “Well, you’re really not allowed to do that.” Like these people over here? [Marisol points to other patrons, a white mother and daughter] I pointed them out. ...You let them put things in their hair. She said, “Well, they weren’t allowed to.” And I was like, “But you didn’t tell them anything.” That’s the difference. “Well, if you really didn’t want people to do that, than you need to put a sign out because that’s not right.”

Marisol and her mother confronted the shopkeepers, asking for equal treatment on par with other customers. The repeated emphasis on proper signage is central because a sign is universal and does not discriminate. A sign that indicates what is “off limits” would broadcast this line to all shop patrons, rather than allowing these lines to be drawn at the whim and will of store clerks. Here, the actions of white customers are condoned while those same actions undertaken by Marisol are rebuked. This excerpt also brings forward echoes of discrimination from earlier eras that decried Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and other minorities as “dirty” or “unclean” (Montejano 1987; Montejano 1999; Sanchez 1993). Clearly, vestiges of earlier forms of discrimination persist. Interestingly, Marisol related this story not in answer to a question about discrimination but a question about the first time she realized there was a concept in the world called “race.” It is incredibly

telling that she selected a tale of discrimination to demonstrate her knowledge of the reality of “race” in the world.⁸⁵ Even if “race” has been debunked as a biological truth, it undoubtedly carries much social weight.

Behavioral Resistances:

◊Proving One’s Self Through Overachievement

Negative stereotypes are an overlooked form of discrimination; they set up negative expectations that function as both a roadmap and a roadblock for individuals against whom they are directed.⁸⁶ Negative stereotypes saddle their targets with the burden of puzzling through the situation and sometimes internalizing this maltreatment, lowering their senses of self-worth or heightening their sense of social insecurity. Sometimes negative stereotypes lead to lowered expectations for the performance of Mexican Americans, while other times it develops into avoidance of Mexican Americans in social, community, or professional arenas. This social avoidance or professional invisibility is discrimination, a move toward exclusion, self-segregation, and marginalization of the “othered” group. While all three generations experienced this phenomenon, they reacted to it differently. By in large, the first generation Mexican immigrants yielded to the sense of lesser social value—which developed into agoraphobia in one case—while the second and third generation Mexican Americans adopted a more assertive or combative response, arguing for the value of their personhood and professional status. I argue that generational position influences reaction to discrimination; that is, the immigrant generation felt that its position in the U.S. was tenuous whereas the two succeeding

⁸⁵ This is true for the majority of my respondents.

⁸⁶ A number of instances of discrimination occurred in schools—in classrooms, on playgrounds, with administrators—and this material will be covered in Chapter Five.

generations felt a sense of permanence (Sanchez 1993) and were therefore emboldened to argue for their “cultural citizenship” (Flores and Benmayor 1997).⁸⁷ While all three generations were subjected to discrimination, the first generation either was disinclined to acknowledge it or adopted the coping strategy of avoidance, whereas the second and third generations had the propensity to take on the challenge of “proving themselves” and overachieve as a result, as well as assert pride in and represent their ethnic group.

People often approach Mexican American men with pre-conceived ideas about who they are, where they come from, and where they are headed, that are based on negative stereotypes. These negative stereotypes are often leveraged after a cursory assessment of a person’s physical characteristics. Ricardo Torres remarked on how his facial scars and moustache get him typecast as a gang-banger: “I think when people look at me they see my scars, and like I said, the moustache or whatnot. A lot of times people get the impression that I’m a gangster or a cholo or something like that. That really bothers me because that is just totally what I’m not about.”

Moises Ramos, a twenty-eight year-old third-generation male whose “dad was a drug addict and [his] mom was his number one customer” grew up in an environment where his “family, everybody, thought [he] was going to be a loser, a screw up.” Moises overcame enormous family obstacles to lead a clean life and become a high school career counselor. He experiences the common reaction of needing to “prove himself”: “I’ve got to still prove myself because people are still always going to have this doubt about me. So the more I prove myself the better that I feel about myself.” Succeeding against

⁸⁷ Flores and Benmayor define “cultural citizenship” as social practices that claim and establish a distinct social space for Latinos. They argue for Latino incorporation without assimilation, namely that Latinos should activate a “both-and” approach (they are “both” Latino “and” American) by taking advantage of their citizenship rights as well as keeping cultural expressions alive that enrich the country.

others' doubts boosts his self-confidence, but certainly he suffers an up-hill battle burden of having to prove his self-worth rather than having it already assumed. He needs to "prove himself" not just because of his family background but because of his racial background, the element visible to outsiders:

People automatically judge you as being something you're not just because of the way you look.... For instance, I was in a bar celebrating one of my friend's birthdays. This lady saw me and she kind of said it out loud, 'oh, he's mean looking.' I was thrown by it. For some reason I just smiled. She was like, 'oh my God, he has a dimple,' or something like that. So we started talking and she asked what I did and I told her [career counselor]. 'Oh my God, I never would have guessed.' I was like, 'obviously you shouldn't judge a book by it's cover.' She had this image of us—Mexicans—in Santa Maria, that's where she's from, bald and mean and involved in gangs and stuff like that.

When confronted inter-personally with stereotypes, Moises opens a dialogue in order to disprove and disarm the stereotype cast on him.

The idea of having to "prove one's self" was an undercurrent of many interviews. One woman remarked that she felt her daughter had experienced discrimination and how she had converted this experience into an "aggressiveness" or "motivation" to achieve a "great education." While Gustavo Vasconcelos remarked that he had "a bit more to prove" in high school sports because "not much was expected from a Hispanic guy coming on the football field," Rafael Treviño, a businessman, learned to transform these low expectations into an asset. Rafael explains his logic on the unexpected value of being "underestimated" in the business world: "Because they perceive us as being Latino and that we're 'less' capable, to me, that's an underestimation of what we can do.... It's easier to strategize against someone who underestimates you than someone who overestimates you and believes that you're some kind of a super-power." Being

underestimated, then, provides freedom from scrutiny and allows the business to operate without much outside interference.

Tyler Mendoza and Milo Contreras more directly felt the need to “prove themselves” against negative stereotypes and low expectations. Both men felt pressure to overturn the negative expectation of academic underachievement. Tyler, a third generation man from Vacaville, refers to his parents’ stress on education and his own need to disprove the expectation of educational failure:

My parents always pushed school, school, school, school. So I had to do better in school[.] You know, C’s were not that good, you get A’s and B’s. C’s meant that you could do better. So, they always pushed from day one that I had to do better in school. I knew I had to try harder. I had to try harder and prove that I wasn’t one of those dumb lazy Mexicans or the ones that are going to drop out and get somebody pregnant[.]

Clearly, Tyler is proving himself against aggregate, pessimistic images of Mexican Americans that shadow him but he wants to ensure do not encompass him. Tyler goes on to comment further on the image of “dirty Mexican” which his parents were bound and determined to guarantee he avoided by spending extra attention on his cleanliness:

...these are things we have to go up against: we’re not as smart, we’re not as smart, we’re not clean, you know, I guess we don’t know how to act. ...in the sixth grade, I love playing tether ball. I was pretty good at it and I wanted to wear a shirt that I wore yesterday. It was clean. And she said, no, you can’t wear that shirt twice because people will think that you’re a dirty Mexican so you can’t wear that twice. You never wear a shirt two days in a row. You always wash your shirt. You never do that. And that is when it struck me. Okay, I got to be cleaner. I got to be cleaner.

The strain of Mexican inferiority ideology that spurred “germ theories” proliferated after the Mexican-American War. “Germ theories” held that “dirty Mexicans” were unhealthy and unhygienic, therefore deserving to be quarantined. The derogatory term “dirty

Mexican” was a quadruple-entendre: 1) a synonym for dark skin color and inferiority, 2) agricultural laborer who works the earth, 3) unhygienic, and 4) a metaphor for their low status in the class structure (Montejano 1987: 227).⁸⁸

Milo Contreras, the second generation Mexican American lawyer in Ventura introduced earlier, proved himself against negative expectations by attaining a law degree and becoming a successful lawyer. His long narrative delves into a number of themes already touched upon, such as intra-Mexican stereotypes, proclaiming another’s “ignorance” as a protective device, and overachievement as a primary way of capsizing stereotypes. Milo reflects on two formative experiences, starting with a co-worker from his youth who was also Mexican American:

I remember an experience with this guy named Sidney who was a track star at the high school.... He worked at the store [I worked at] and so when I came in at thirteen he was about nineteen.... He was a meat-cutter at the store. I eventually became a meat-cutter and ran the register and pretty much did everything. And so he asked me, “hey, what do you want to do when you grow up, man?” I said, “I wanna be a lawyer.” “Baaaaah!” He almost rolled on the ground laughing. “You guy!” He was just cracking up. Well, he was one of my first invites to the University of California, Los Angeles Law School graduation. And I still have the tie that he gave me as a graduation present. Yeah, so that sort of changed his mind about stereotypes, even among our own people.

JMV: I imagine that was a proud moment to send off that invitation.

Milo: Sure, sure. And he was very proud, too. He could see how wrong one can be in our perceptions....

⁸⁸ Widespread low wages and labor controls constrained Mexicans to the low stratum of the class structure, and the housing they could afford or that they were afforded by their employers were far substandard (often “renovated” animal living quarters), thereby heightening the risk of disease. “Such poverty-related diseases, needless to say, validated the fear Anglos had of dirty Mexicans.” Montejano, David. 1987. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Through institutionally-enforced repressive practices, Mexicans were kept in squalid living conditions and low-paying, coercive working arrangements that inhibited their ability to climb the labor ladder or flatly disprove persistent stereotypes.

Sidney, himself a Mexican American, outright laughed at Milo's dream to become a lawyer. Sidney had not only internalized a low expectation for his ethnic group but had become an enforcer of such under-par achievement, as evidenced by his boisterous laughter at Milo's future hopes. Fortunately for both of them, Milo used the negative expectation as a benchmark to surpass. Notably, Milo shared news of his law degree with Sidney so that they could be proud both of his individual achievement as well as how that success enfeebles the stereotype that had encroached upon them both years earlier.

Milo and I continued our conversation where we had left off:

JMV: Did you ever get the sense that you had to overcome those stereotypes? Or was it just a matter of doing the best you could without much thought or regard for....

Milo: I always felt that I was going to "get back at them." Even when I was in the [U.S.] Army. I was an enlisted person, so you take a lot of orders, especially in the lower ranks. As you advance a little bit...then you are okay because then you've got people that work under you and you delegate a lot of tasks and all that and take a more leadership role. But when I got out of my third year in law school and when I graduated, I had recruitment letters from the Navy, the Air Force, the Army, the Marine Corps to go into the J.A.G. Corps, which is...the legal branch of the services. It's the Judge Advocate General Corps which is military lawyers and you go in as a Captain. I thought to myself, "Gee that's tempting, only because all of these racist rednecks that I came across will now have to salute this short Mexican." (laugh) I had that sense, I don't know, revenge or whatever.... But, in terms of how do you combat it, that's one good way [to] combat these negative feelings you might get from being the victim from a stereotype. You say, "This stereotype you had is now a Captain you salute!" when you see them. That's a lot more effective and more satisfying then just getting angry.

As noted briefly earlier, negative expectations can be converted into motivation for achievement. While Milo did not go into the J.A.G. Corps, he did still become an established lawyer, still "proving" himself through his occupation and "getting back at

them.” Living according to the old adage that “living well is the best revenge,” Milo verifies his self- and group-worth. Milo’s law degree and legal profession symbolize his having triumphed over negative expectations and stereotypes and, even if he never has a chance to encounter the “racist rednecks” from his Army days, these credentials empower his sense of equality.

Middle class Mexican Americans can internalize racism before actually experiencing discrimination on a personal level. All that is needed for this to occur is an understanding of history, the extant racial hierarchy, and perchance being witness to family members’ or friends’ struggles with racism. Indeed, this teaching can even occur within the cradle of the family, as with one third generation woman who is of Mexican and Italian descent whose Italian mother “discriminates against Mexicans herself, except for the fact that her daughter is half Mexican. She is okay with me Mexican, but only half Mexican! She says the Italian side is stronger! ...She thinks a lot of Mexicans are really lazy and stupid. But I am different because I am her daughter.” This historical and social exposure teaches people about racial problems in the world prior to their personal subjection to those problems. In several cases, inferiority complexes, or racist tendencies refracted from the outside world and turned inward against the self, work against an individual’s ability to build self-esteem. In this way, history bears down heavily upon even the youngest generation in my study because they are quick learners of society’s racial hierarchy and ingest these lessons even as they try to dispute them.

Samantha Diaz, the twenty-five year old legal secretary in Santa Barbara introduced earlier, explained how she feels like her Mexican American background is a hindrance, a penalty she must “make up for” or “prove herself” against. As third world

feminist scholars, in particular, have noted, being a racial or ethnic minority *plus* being a woman makes one a “double minority” (Acevedo 2001; Collins 1986; Collins 1991; Segura 1995) or “multiply oppressed” (King 1988). Minority women have two minority positions to account for (make sense of, make up for, battle from, etc.) as they navigate the social world and try to achieve equal treatment in gender and race relations, plus equal opportunity and remuneration in the workforce. Samantha finds herself in a double bind by being a Mexican American woman and must “prove herself”:

I feel like I always have to prove something because I’m Mexican. I feel like people look down on me.... I don’t know if that’s racial, I don’t know if that’s self esteem, but maybe sometimes they go hand in hand. ...I tend to think people look down on me because I’m Mexican. I’ve convinced myself that I will never be as successful as someone who is white, who possibly has the same qualifications as me, but they will go more places than I can. And maybe too because I am a woman, too. I’m Mexican and a woman.

She is unable to attribute this feeling of people looking down on her to being Mexican or being a woman, likely because both of those social positions are currently undervalued in United States society. She points out that the inferiority that sprouts from being looked down upon is due to race or self esteem, but that those concepts might “go hand in hand,” race informing how high or low one’s self esteem ought to sit.

Samantha’s heritage plays a significant role on the job: “I think I put a lot of stress on myself with my job. Because I know that I’m Mexican and I know that I have to prove twice as much as a white coworker because I’m Mexican.” For her, this translates to dressing well and being “on her toes” at work and being extra-professional. She distinctly feels that she must be more professional than her white coworkers in order to make up for a racial penalty.

Responses to negative stereotypes are generationally patterned. The oldest generation is plagued by social insecurity and phobia, while the following two generations are typified by a tendency to prove themselves through a sturdy work ethic and achievement. The women respondents of all generations spent a great deal of mental energy and emotional resources pondering whether their unequal treatment was due to their gender or their race, illuminating how the intersectionality of identity makes for complex questions.

◇Rebound Racism

Social action against discrimination can take place on an interpersonal level in response to direct discrimination, yet it can also take place on an individual or group level in response to another party being discriminated against. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) coined the term “rebound racism” which refers to racism that is felt indirectly and in sympathy with the targets of racist acts. Frankenberg addresses the sympathy and injury that white people can feel on behalf of a black spouse or loved one, how a shift in positionality can occur due to emotional proximity to the victim of racism. This concept has wider application than sympathy across races. Cordelia Fuentes, a Mexican American from San Diego and the mother of Marisol, called on this concept of “rebound racism” as she felt herself vicariously betrayed by a retailer who mistreated Mexican immigrants. She informs me:

There was some discrimination here [San Diego] that got me very upset. A JC Penny’s suspected that a Mexican family was stealing and so instead of calling the police they called Immigration [INS]. And they got deported. So that made me really angry. So I don’t dare go into that store. So, not so much things that have happened to me but have happened to others make me upset.

Cordelia did not have to be party to the discrimination to feel that the act was wrong and to protest it. If others joined her, Cordelia's individual action could gain momentum and become a sizeable boycott, making a strong statement against racial discrimination.

◇*Conspicuous Consumption*

Minority populations are well versed in the negative stereotypes that circulate about them. Understanding the commonplace practice of fusing race, class, and immigration status led some interviewees to avoid these stereotypes through conspicuous consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Veblen 1998). Some specifically strategized to slip under the race/class/immigrant radar in attempt to avoid racial profiling and vigilant surveillance by the police force. Sergio Diaz, a second generation Mexican American man, explained how the assumption of Mexicans as poor figured into his Mexican immigrant father's fondness for new cars. Sergio's father spent money he barely had in order to buy a new car every few years in attempt to prove his newly earned (and probably barely) middle class status. Through his conspicuous consumption, Sergio's father was likely trying to attain legitimacy. The mismatch, however, in the eyes of the police force of the 1960s, between Mexicans and new cars resulted in Sergio and his brother periodically being pulled over and interrogated by the police:

When I was in school. It was a green and white...Monte Carlo. ...I was driving along and got pulled over. And they couldn't believe—what are you doing driving this car? The same thing happened to my older brother. It was like, “because I'm Mexican you can't have something?” You are stigmatized as just being... poor, dirt poor or something. I mean, you're young; you're just starting to drive. You didn't mouth off to the cops at all. Especially when so much of the police force—especially back then—was Caucasian.

Sergio believes that he and his brother would not have been stopped if they were a lighter skin color. Sergio's logic connects with the critique of racial profiling, that is, that the "tautological use of statistics" on crime and incarceration "tacitly validate pre-existing stereotypes" (Brown 2003: 151).

Conclusion

I have examined the kinds of discrimination that middle class Mexican Americans encounter in order to elucidate the interpersonal and structural injustices with which they contend, extending previous studies of white-black discrimination. In congruence with Feagin's findings on anti-black discrimination, this study reveals that the "color stigma" (Feagin 1991: 114) is crucial in how Mexican Americans are treated in public realms. Further, as Feagin noted in the case of blacks, Mexican Americans regularly contend with two aspects of "additive discrimination": "1) the cumulative character of an *individual's* experiences with discrimination; and 2) the *group's* accumulated historical experiences as perceived by the individual" (Feagin 1991: 114).

Sites of discrimination that are consistent through generation include retail spaces and other public venues. Who gets targeted for discrimination is based on specific, non-personal factors such as name and physical features. The phenomena of the shopowner tailgate, racial profiling and cross-discrimination by police are ubiquitous in all three generations. Some sites of discrimination are specific to generation, such as the second and third generation experiencing more challenges in the face of home ownership, residential mobility, and occupational advancement. Further, each generation develops a stylized manner of responding to discrimination that both creates and reflects its own distinct relationship to the U.S. The first generation is typified by gratitude for greater

opportunity in the U.S. and is loathe to criticize. Alternatively, the second and third generations engage in social activism based on the set of rights and privileges accorded to them as U.S.-born citizens and a well-honed ideology of permanence and belonging. The challenges Mexican Americans confront morph from generation to generation as their collective identity changes. Further, the experience of discrimination presses each generation to articulate a relationship both to Mexico and the U.S. in its response to social injustices.

My study has also demonstrated that victims' reactions to acts of discrimination are also worthy of scrutiny, for reactions reveal how individuals consolidate their sense of self. The dominant group attempts to secure its group position by acts of discrimination that threaten the individual and group identity of the target (Blumer 1958). The intended victim's reaction is vital in the effort to recoup a dignified sense of identity. By examining not just the act of discrimination by the aggressor but the response of the intended victim, we see how action-and-reaction works in tandem to produce shifts in self-perception and social representation.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEXTBOOK RACIALIZATION: SCHOOLS, FAMILIES, AND INTERGENERATIONAL COPING STRATEGIES

“Through *policies* which are explicitly or implicitly racial, state institutions organize and enforce the racial politics of everyday life.”
(Omi and Winant 1994: 83)

This chapter treats the educational system as a site of racial identity formation. School systems are simultaneously racialized and racializing⁸⁹ and so students’ and parents’ responses to this institution are critical to one’s awareness of race-related issues. The family remains a critical site of racial identity development as it is a locale where inter-generational biography-based teaching occurs and strategies of action and resistance are formed. It is within both schools and families that students respond to racialized conduct (by internalizing or contesting it) and re-negotiate their racial self-understanding. Parents often use their own schooling experience as fodder for the inter-generational transfer of knowledge and ideologies to their children.

This chapter examines the influence of educational systems on immigrants’ and citizens’ racial identity formation and family ideologies and practices. Previous studies on schools and racial identity formation reveal two major flaws. First, existing research does not adequately consider the role of families in amplifying or mitigating the process of racialization. What difference do families and parenting strategies make? Second, the works typically capture a specific moment in time. What are the cumulative effects of

⁸⁹ By placing the educational system at the center of this critical analysis I do not mean to execute an indictment against the institution at large. My intent is not to employ the “logic of the trial,” meaning that there is will either to convict or exonerate a society, institution, or group, etc., for or from the sin of racism. Following Loic Wacquant, I hold that to conduct sociological analysis is not to conduct a trial but seeks instead “to explain and understand, not to excoriate or exculpate, denigrate or celebrate” Wacquant, Loic J.D. 1997. “For an Analytic of Racial Domination.” *Political Power and Social Theory* 11:221-234. (pg. 227).

racialization across family generations? Thus, the central questions for this chapter are: how do second and third generation Mexican Americans experience their social identity within the educational system? How do parents' experiences with their own schooling shape their parenting styles? This chapter makes three inter-related arguments. First, schools are a racializing agent for all three generations; schools have been and continue to be a site for the creation and articulation of race. Second, students' perceptions of their racial identity are partially dependent on historical era; second generation Mexican American interviewees were subjected to overt discrimination whereas third generation interviewees were subjected to covert discrimination. Third, family ideologies concerning education directly reflect parents' own experience in school or in their natal family regarding education. While the family linkages that I detail are not necessarily causal, they are suggestive of educational trajectories that are patterned by a family's historical experience and succeeding ideological stance.

First, I review relevant literatures. I then argue that schools are most often the place where people first realize the social significance of the category "race." Next, I move to a generational analysis, detailing the historical backdrop of discrimination that typified each generation's experience in school. Finally, I tease out generational linkages within families that elucidate the process of self-reflexive intergenerational transfer of knowledge and belief systems about schooling.

Literature Review

Institutions are significant in shaping a host of life outcomes, including immigrants' incorporation into a community (Bloemraad 2002; Menjivar 2003; Reitz 1998a), and

notions of civic participation and national identity (Bellah 1986; Wedeen 1999). Richard Alba and Victor Nee call for “new institutionalism,” that is, an investigation of how “institutionalized incentives matter in channeling the action of individuals and groups” (Alba and Nee 2003: 14). Regarding immigrant groups, Alba and Nee contend that trajectories of incorporation depend on interplay between purposive action of immigrants and descendants, plus their context and “structures of opportunity” (institutions, cultural beliefs, and social networks). Since “every state *institution* is a racial institution” (Omi and Winant 1994: 83, emphasis in original), examining the interplay between structures (schools) and agency (families and individuals) is crucial in understanding how institutions bear on racial self-understandings and the assimilation process.

In particular, schools highlight the salience of race. School classrooms (Lucas 1999; Oakes 2005; Weis and Fine 2005) and social spaces (Tatum 1997) are often segregated by race. Race, racial scripts, and racial inequality are reproduced in day-to-day life in schools (Lewis 2003). Furthermore, school authorities frequently (if unwittingly) judge and treat racial minorities according to prevalent racial stereotypes, and by impressing them re-create those stereotypes (Ferguson 2000). In interacting with students based upon understandings of race and class, teachers and administrators maintain discourses and systems of inequality (Morris 2005).

Schools are a primary site of socialization outside of the family. They are locales where much teaching and learning about social life and national culture takes place (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989). Indeed, Tobin, Wu and Davidson conclude from their international comparative study that all schools are concerned "that young children be

taught to identify with something larger than themselves and their families (204, emphasis added).

Yet, families also have formative power. Axes of social division intersect in families, forcing families to devise strategies of action and teach their children accordingly (Lareau 2003). Families are key in reinforcing particular aspects of identity, such as race, religion, or gender (Cohen and Eisen 2000). They also mold educational aspirations (although the link between aspirations and outcomes is unclear) (Kao 1998; MacLeod 2004). Families and “fictive kin” can also be a wellspring of survival strategies and interdependent support (Stack 1974). This chapter argues that racial identities are constructed in interaction between families and institutions.

First Realization of Race Stories Crosscut Generations

It was common for the two generations educated in the U.S. to apprehend the importance of race for the first time at school. Schools are one of the primary sites of socialization outside of the family and, as such, are locales where much teaching and learning about social life and national culture takes place (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989). My research demonstrates that children first realize race in school, and then come to identify with it, along a number of major axes of difference such as phenotype, formal name, language, and food. Recognizing skin color variations often consolidates a conception of race, as with second generation Rafael Treviño: “Somebody pointed out to me [in elementary school in the 1950s] that I was a little darker than they were. ...I went home and I was washing my hands and I was trying to wash the darkness out. It was just a split moment, just realizing, ‘hey, this isn’t gonna come off.’” Realizing the disadvantage that

skin color carries (Pager and Quillian 2005) led people to try to “cleanse” themselves of this liability by earnest washing or using skin bleaching agents. Another interviewee, third generation Daniel Zagada, speaks simply of being in a racially heterogeneous setting and how “seeing” different skin colors and physical features is tantamount to seeing race: “I went to a school that was very diverse so we had a lots of blacks and Filipino, white, Asians. So pretty early on, you can’t miss that. I mean, you see it.”

A person’s first and last name is also an axis of difference that serves to distinguish groups according to Spanish and non-Spanish origin. Timothy, whose given name is “Timoteo,” tells me how his grade school teacher Anglicized his name to make it easier to pronounce. In this case, Timothy’s teacher muted his foreignness as she used her school-sanctioned authority to acculturate him:

My name is “Timoteo.” When I was in fourth grade my teacher, Miss Green, she was from England. She changed my name to “Timothy.” And I’ve always had it since. Except for my family, to my family I’m “Timoteo.”

JMV: How is it your 4th grade teacher re-named you?

Timothy: You know, people thought teachers were pretty smart, they knew what they were doing. (laugh)

Timothy noted that “everybody got their names changed” in the ‘40s and ‘50s. To have one’s name Anglicized by a school authority whom you are taught to respect inculcates the sense that one’s new name is better, imputing deficiency to one’s original name. Moreover, a teacher changing—or correcting—students’ names serves to transport them figuratively from their family’s country of origin and into the U.S. via the road of cultural

acceptability. Language marks cultural crossings, so for teachers to re-name students is to erase a native culture and superimpose a U.S.-centered national culture.⁹⁰

Part of the acculturation process of migrants to the U.S., especially across generations, involves the acquisition of English. The educational system is pivotal in teaching English to immigrants and their families. Schools not only teach classes in language and other substantive areas, but they also teach cultural, national, and racial lessons. Albert Schultz, a child of immigrants, remarks, “When I was in school I couldn’t speak English. My first language was Spanish and I remember practicing ‘Pledge Allegiance to the Flag.’ That was probably the first words in English that I learned how to speak.” Other interviewees recalled being punished for speaking Spanish, being warned to not speak Spanish in order to avoid having their mouths taped shut, and most disturbingly, being placed in a class for the mentally retarded. Nearly all of my second generation interviewees complained that schools decried Spanish speaking as a deficiency rather than a linguistic advantage. In the 1990s, the tide slowly turned such that some of these same second generation interviewees found that Spanish speaking abilities were finally seen as a benefit in the workforce. That said, some schools steered third generation interviewees away from Spanish, including Tony Lopez who refers to the mid-1970s:

[In] probably kindergarden or first grade, I remember a teacher telling me not to talk Spanish. “We don’t speak Spanish here, we speak American.” “American” as opposed to “English.” When I was in grade school—and it wasn’t that long ago—it was not proper to speak Spanish. So, I didn’t speak Spanish in school. Whereas now it is so widely accepted and promoted. I do a lot of things for the

⁹⁰ While Timothy found the idea of reverting to his given name in adulthood “kinda strange,” another interviewee did exactly that in order to re-claim Mexican roots that had been jettisoned at the hand of a schoolteacher.

Spanish community. It is very much promoted now, “oh, do you speak Spanish? Good, we want that. We want people to speak their native tongues.” Whereas when I was in kindergarten I was told by a teacher, “We speak American here.”

Indeed, cultural teaching comes in the form of language requirements enforced in the classroom. Being American means speaking American...that is, English.

Much like language, food does a lot of culture work. Cuisine serves as a cultural marker and is similarly difficult to hide in a school environment that is filled with policing eyes and ears. American identity, in this case, is measured by the contents of one’s lunchbag. As Rafael Treviño quipped, “The American dream was an Anglo family, a white Anglo family. We knew [we were] eating burritos and somebody else was making peanut butter sandwiches. There’s a difference and you understand that.” Noting that Mexican food has recently become fashionable (Davis 2000), he continues, “Now burritos and taquitos and enchiladas, everybody loves them. When I was a kid, you couldn’t show ‘em. They would make fun of you.” Pressure to conform and desire to fit in is what makes some of this school-age surveillance so poignant.

In sum, whether the axis of difference is phenotype, formal name, language, or food, youth in school comprehend the overarching lesson being taught: in order to be socially accepted in peer circles, within the school at large, or in the nation as a whole, one must minimize the cultural and linguistic distance between one’s self and the larger American mainstream. Schools, and the actors within them, inform students, in one way or another, that they were not just individuals but *racialized* individuals.

A Common Ideology: Education as Key to the “American Dream”

The predominant family ideology about education espoused by the twenty-nine families I interviewed is rooted in the American Dream. Families perceive education as a means to attain the American Dream (namely financial gain, upward mobility, and a mark of overall success). Indeed, all of the families interviewed followed a pathway of upward mobility through the three generations. The educational attainment of virtually all families rose in each succeeding generation. Table 5.1 profiles the educational achievement of all three generations in my respondent pool.⁹¹

Table 5.1

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY GENERATION

	Jr. High or Less	High School	GED	Some College	College	Master's	Doctoral Degree	Total
Gen1	8**	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Gen2	1	2	1	12	6	5	3	30
Gen3	0***	5^	1	6^^	12*	4*	1*	29
Total	9	7	2	18	18	9	4	67

*NOTE: Gen3 is the youngest age group, so educational attainment not completed.

**NOTE: All Gen1 fall into this category of Junior High or less.

***NOTE: All Gen3 had at least Junior high diploma and on their way to at least a high school diploma.

^NOTE: All five Gen3 noted here were currently attending high school, on track to graduate, and envisioning continuing on with higher education at a city college, college, or university.

^^NOTE: 3 of the 6 Gen3 in this cell were attending college at the time of the interview.

As will be detailed below, the dominance of the American Dream ideology varies by gender, generation, and class status.

The American Dream equates education with career options and financial rewards. Guillermo Ramirez, a second generation man from Sacramento, links together

⁹¹ See also Appendix C for educational data by family.

all three generations of his family as he discusses how his parents, and in turn he, came to recognize education as a lynchpin of the American Dream.⁹² As with all of my immigrant generation respondents, Guillermo's parents had less than junior high school educations from Mexico. Yet, they saw the value of education:

My parents—I don't know how it happened—but my parents somehow became aware of the value of education. They were always telling us, "I'll help you as much as I can." I had that support. ...Many times [for] the second generation it was: "you're old enough to go to work and help the family." And it wasn't that [for me]. ...I don't think [my parents] finished *primaria* [grade school]...in Mexico.... My grandmother was very instrumental in me going to law school because she would just tell me, "*Sea abogado.*" ["Be a lawyer."] I'd say, "What's '*abogado*,' mama?" She'd tell me, "lawyer."

Guillermo indeed got his law degree and set up his own law firm. In addition to being a proponent of education at the community level (he formed an association in the '60s to raise money for scholarships for Mexican American students), he espoused the value of schooling to his two sons. He spoke of the unified vision of he and his wife, "we've always inculcated [that] it was not whether they were going to get a college education—they were going to get a college education. ...People with an education get better jobs, earn more."

Lance Morelos, a third generation man, spoke about how his parents worked hard, sacrificed, and selected a residence based on the quality of the school district. Lance spoke about how his parents enacted their family ideology about the importance of education in both word and deeds:

⁹² An offshoot of this American Dream ideology is Mexican American families' desire to not only obtain the American Dream for their own aggrandizement but to prove themselves and their worth to mainstream culture. A more elaborate discussion of the notion of "proving one's self" against negative stereotypes is found in Chapter Four.

[My dad's] whole key in life was to get us educations. My mom, since I was in high school, would say, "I don't care if you get a degree in underwater basket weaving, get a degree." So we always lived in a very good area, which was predominantly a white area, in the smallest house, because they had the better schools. And they knew that. And so there would be nine of us in a three bedroom house. For a lot of years until my dad really started to prosper. The goal was "education, education, education." We all went to Catholic school. My parents were in debt most of their life because of it. (laugh) ...My dad was store manager...and he was the only one driving a VW bug when [his co-workers] were all driving Cadillacs and Mercedes.

Lance stressed how getting a degree had unlocked the door to career choice and higher pay:

At [my aerospace engineering job] I got paid more than [others] did just because I had a piece of paper.... There were greater opportunities if you had a college degree. They weren't any smarter than me, I wasn't any smarter than them, but I had the opportunity and the piece of paper. [Before,] I couldn't get a job because I didn't have a piece of paper.... Like my mom said, "it doesn't matter if it's underwater basket-weaving, ping-pong, P.E., political science, just get a piece of paper." I saw it, I lived it.

Lance's degree propelled his occupational and financial upward mobility.

In my sample, second-generation parents with college degrees raise children with the expectation for college degrees, which they tend to obtain. In this way, a college degree often begets a college degree and in turn opens up occupational and monetary opportunity and points the way to the American Dream.

First Generation: Mexican Immigrant Parents' Parenting Strategies

→ "*Do as the Americans Do*"

The American Dream ideology was sometimes accompanied by an assimilationist slant. Ruben and Adele Mendoza, both second generation Mexican Americans living in Vacaville, were taught to "do as the Americans do." This meant an increase in their

educational aspirations and a decrease in their contact with Mexican relatives and grasp on Mexican tradition. Ruben explains that his parents “wanted us to get our education here and do as the Americans do. Now I’m sad and kick myself in the rear for not going with them to Mexico and meet lots of uncles and so forth. ...As far as holding onto the Mexican traditions, I don’t think we ever thought about that.” Ruben’s wife, Adele, concurs with his assessment: “I don’t think [traditions] were pushed onto us. I think once we came and were here it was pretty much you live where you are at and follow what is here. [We spoke Spanish at home yet my mom] didn’t teach us reading or writing in Spanish, so when we went to school we would learn English and so it was easier for us to pick up.” Here also, the educational expectation for daughters was far less than for sons. Adele remarks, “we didn’t have [child labor] laws back then. We were always working the fields as far as I can remember. ...Back then it was ‘girls didn’t go to school, college, just get married and then the man does all the work.’”

It was not just in the immigrant generation but in the second generation as well that women were discouraged from realizing their educational desires. Immigrant parents sometimes saw more immediate use to having their children working at home or in jobs rather than in schools. Jillian Rosenberg, a third generation young woman, explains that higher education was not on her maternal grandparents’ radar screen when it came to her mother’s upbringing: “My mom has always been the black sheep because she went to college. She actually had goals and did something and they always felt like, ‘what is this woman doing, running wild and going off to college and trying to do something with her life?’” Thus, while the ideology of education as a tool for socioeconomic upward mobility is salient for immigrants and their families, it was not evenly endorsed across

genders. Immigrant parents did not necessarily provide enthusiasm for their daughters' education because of gender ideologies of the time and lingering attachments to the traditional Mexican division of labor. Interestingly, as discussed earlier, school systems in the 1950s-1960s were more supportive of second generation Mexican American girls than boys. In this way, the institutions of family and school provided diametrically opposed supports and pressures for the Mexican American second generation based on gender.

→ “*Get a Job; School is Just Recess*”

The emphasis on education as a way to attain the American Dream varied not only by gender but also by class position. Families with substantially lower class origins did not subscribe wholesale to the notion of education as a pathway to the American Dream, in part due to their lack of knowledge surrounding educational opportunities following high school. The lower a family's class status, the more exigent their financial circumstances, the more likely they are to push the next generation out into the job market for immediate remuneration rather than delaying earning income due to schooling. Some parents' experience with labor market discrimination and restricted occupational opportunity lowered their hopes for their children. Albert Schultz, a second generation man who recalls his first English words as those in the “Pledge Allegiance to the Flag,” spoke of how culture conditioned his parents' expectations: “One of the traditions they had at that time was that all Mexicans should be *zapateros* [shoemiths] or *carpinteros* [carpenters] or *mecánicos* [mechanics] for automobiles so it was hard for them to understand why I was going to college. For them, going to school was just

recess.” Second generation individuals were intermediate between the immigrants who had grade school educations and the third generations for whom college degrees become the norm. Sometimes the second generation pushed for educational credentials that were outside of their parents’ ability to financially support or emotionally understand. Ruby Castillo who speaks of her own biography as well as that of her son, Dillon, captures her family’s three generation educational trajectory:

Education was not a big part of our family. Mom had 3rd, 4th grade education and dad had the same. ...So in the family [education] was never really pushed, stressed, but I felt that I needed to pursue a higher education so I pushed myself. ...Get an education. I saw that as a pathway to get out of poverty.... In my kid’s generation, unfortunately, they don’t know any struggles. I had to struggle if I wanted to get ahead, I had to take it upon myself to get educated and to get out and to work to buy my own clothes, etc., etc., And I say that unfortunately, because I don’t see their inner passion. And for example, the son at University of California, Santa Barbara [is] so used to having everything...taken care of from food, roof over the head etc., to knowing that somehow we will be paying for [his] education. Where I felt I had to pay for my own education or find the money, etc. So when I saw his [application] essay, there was nothing about a struggle. [It was] “I want to be God, I want to be President,” that type of essay.

While Ruby had to seek out educational opportunities and funding sources, part of the downside of achieving comfortable middle class standing may be her children’s loss of some character-building passion and zest. While part of the impact of her children’s more coddled lifestyle may be the undesirable attribute of entitlement, the knowledge she has to coach her children throughout the college process speaks to the cultural and economic capital that a college degree bestows.

→ *“Girls Don’t Need to Get an Education”*

The Mexican immigrants in my sample arrived in the United States with little grade school education, yet some women wanted more education, but were prohibited by

their patriarchal husbands. This was the case of Ramona Vargas, an immigrant whose husband first came with the Bracero Program⁹³ in 1944 and who eventually got legal papers through her husband's employment. She worked in a packing house, canneries, and then for ten years in housekeeping in a hospital. Her husband worked in the fields as well as in hospital maintenance. I asked how she adjusted after her move from Mexico to the U.S. and she complained about the educational cap that her husband enforced and the occupational and income ceiling this imposed:

I didn't know anything when I came here. Nothing.... He never agreed for me to go to school. I wanted to go to school to learn but he didn't agree with that. So, OK. We were going to get the lowest paying jobs around because we had no education, so no good jobs.

I later explicitly asked about how she felt her gender affected the way in which she could navigate her life. She was unequivocal in her response:

I wish I would be a man instead of a woman. (laugh) ...I couldn't do things on my own, I couldn't make my own decision or anything like that. ...It [gender] makes a lot of difference in life, because to me I wanted to go to school and have a little bit of education. I went to school in Mexico but not enough to get a good job here. I wanted to be a dressmaker and I wanted to go take classes at the junior college. I couldn't do that because my husband didn't want me to. To go to school? Nope. So I just worked and come home and raise kids and that's about it. I didn't learn anything and now I regret that because I could have found a job part-time like a receptionist or something where you sit and don't have to be moving so much or lifting heavy things. To file in hospitals or something, to learn to be a nurse or something.... But I couldn't do it. But I started to go to those classes for sewing and I made three things. I made a skirt, I made an apron

⁹³ The Bracero Program was a guest worker program created in 1942 by the U.S. federal government in order to fill labor shortages brought on by World War II. The Bracero Program was terminated in 1964 although the tide had already turned against Mexican labor with the passage of the 1954 Operation Wetback program that called for Immigration and Naturalization Services sweeps of suspected illegal aliens. During this program, one million Mexican nationals (including some U.S. citizens of Mexican descent) were deported. Gutiérrez, David. 1995. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and the politics of ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Montejano, David. 1987. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

and I made a dress. That's it. Then I had to stop. Because I was having a lot of problems at home.

Her husband's patriarchal ideals stunted Ramona's educational aspirations and thereby capped her occupational mobility as well as limited her sense of satisfaction and self-realization. Left to her own devices, Ramona would have achieved more education. Interestingly, her job objectives (and even the three items she made in sewing class) still fall into the gender-coded labor category of "pink collar" jobs, most likely a reflection of her time. While not all husbands in the first generation were as patriarchal as Ramona's mate, husbands sought to demonstrate their masculinity by being the primary (if not only) breadwinner for the family. This gendered ideology affected not just the education of the wife but of daughters as well. This tendency to prove masculine value by economically providing for the family is most prevalent in the first generation, as they import cultural ideals from Mexico and an earlier era (in the U.S. as well) where traditional gender roles and separate spheres were the norm. As Hondagneu-Sotelo, a scholar of Mexico-U.S. immigration, points out, it takes families years—if not a whole generation—to adjust to the more egalitarian gender roles in the U.S., sometimes clinging to traditional gender scripts from Mexico and the milieu of the 1940s-1950s (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Second Generation Mexican Americans: The Bridge Generation

→ Experiences in School

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), held that racial segregation in public schools violates the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection of the laws.⁹⁴ This

⁹⁴ Section 1 of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or

decision overruled the 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that upheld state-imposed racial segregation based on the separate-but-equal doctrine (that separate facilities for blacks and whites was permissible under the 14th Amendment so long as they were equal). The *Brown* decision concluded that separate is inherently unequal.

Desperately unequal school buildings typify the pre-1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* era. Some of the second generation respondents who are now in their early to mid-60s were school-age in the 1950s, around the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Perhaps contrary to popular belief, “Jim Crow”-style racism reached beyond Blacks in the South and affected the Mexican Americans in the Southwest as well, as David Montejano (1987) documents. Timothy Ponce describes these separate and unequal conditions in the late 1950s and early 1960s:

There was a Mexican high school and there was the other one. We always knew that. It was just different being in a different place. It wasn't all Mexican, but that's where all the Mexicans went. We lived in the barrio in the north side [of San Jose] and...of course, for the new areas south of the city, there was a new high school for them. That was a pretty fancy high school and then we went to the old one.... That's just the way things are.... There wasn't much you could do, it just happened all the time. I always wondered: “what the hell's going on?”

Timothy sensed that this disparity was unjust and that he was denied opportunities available to others. He notes that he “never went to a college prep program” even though he was a “pretty smart kid.” His response to these unequal school conditions was to persevere, although his response was rare among his peers, many of whom dropped out of school altogether. Timothy eventually earned his Master's degree and became a junior high school principal.

property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Marcel Ruiz, living in Goleta, California, 300 miles south of Timothy Ponce and three years his senior, experienced a similar separate and unequal school setting. Marcel found that “all the Mexicans” were in one smaller building and “the white daughters of the landowners would be in the big building.” Marcel’s narrative suggests the psychological repercussions of educational segregation. Marcel discusses his experience with a kindergarten and first grade English immersion program, after which he was integrated into the big school:

JMV: How did that integration work?

Marcel: Well, I don’t think it worked very well because...when I got to the big school I felt that I was always behind. I...wasn’t quite up to the rest to the rest of the white um, classmates so there was a lot of struggle in learning in the transition[.] When we got through the...integration uh, I...began to feel again that low self-esteem that...I wasn’t very smart. ...They gave us some I.Q. test...and I didn’t even understand the questions so I must of scored very low. So they would put us in bonehead reading class and mostly the Latinos are in the bonehead reading class and...we always seemed to be a little behind and I didn’t do very well in school as I recall.

Marcel struggled with thinking he had a low I.Q. because he was tested before being English proficient, leading him to conclude that he was not smart. As it turns out, Marcel, at sixty-five years old, is a well-established fashion designer who reported the highest household income of all my respondents, at \$400,000 or above.

There is a gender difference in this rule of unequal distribution of school staff attention and encouragement. Tamara Montes-Rosenberg reported institutional support from her high school. She is an exception to the argument above that second generation Mexican Americans fell outside school counselors’ net of guidance and care. In

Tamara's case a school counselor informed her of her college potential and helped to fill the knowledge gap she lacked:

I was incredibly lucky, because I had never thought of going to college and it wasn't a vocabulary that was in our family. It was the high school counselor who called me. And I really thought that I was in trouble, because I had gotten kicked out of [two high schools previously]. I had an attitude. And so when I got called in, I really thought it was because I was in trouble—that I had done something. And then the counselor just called [me in] individually and asked [me], "what plans do you have for when you graduate?" And it was—"I don't know, I hadn't thought about it." And the counselor said, "Well, what kind of interests do you have? What do you think you might want to do? Have you ever thought of college?" And I said "no." And I said, "Well, I can interior design." And she said, "Well, what about being an architect?" "Yeah, I guess so. Maybe." She pulled me out of all of my classes and put me in the college track. She said, "You know, it won't hurt you—if you don't go, you don't go. But if you want to, then at least you have that choice." I got on that track because of this woman just doing her job.

Thus, there are exceptions to the claim that the educations of second generation Mexican Americans were universally marked by overt "Jim Crow" discrimination and outright school sanctioned neglect and disempowerment. This gender variation shows how overt discrimination was unevenly employed even while such discrimination remained the dominant protocol of the era.

→ *The Parenting Strategies of the Second Generation*

In this section I detail the three main parenting styles of the second generation, which partially reflect their own experience at home and school in their youth. My findings in this section dovetail with some of Annette Lareau's findings in *Unequal Childhoods* (2003). Lareau finds that her middle class respondents displayed a "concerted cultivation" logic of child-rearing. In "concerted cultivation," parents actively "develop" their children, often by utilizing parent-child conversations. To the extent that a majority

of my respondent families are middle class by the third generation, the three parenting styles elaborated here fall within the rubric of Lareau's "concerted cultivation" (Lareau 2003). The first parenting style is one of "wholehearted encouragement." By adulthood, most second generation Mexican Americans I interviewed had risen to middle class status or above and were in a position to encourage their children (the third generation) in education. Second generation Mexican Americans who achieved middle class status as a consequence of educational degrees were vocal in encouraging their children to see education as a key to success. The second parenting style regarding education is "healthy skepticism." While generally supportive of educational goals for their children, a number of second generation Mexican Americans were skeptical of the payoff of the school system, based on their own experiences. Second generation Mexican Americans whose progress was stymied by the discriminatory inner-workings of the educational system were supportive of their children's education but were watchful and involved in order to ensure fair treatment of their children. The third parenting style is "pointed encouragement," which was developed in reaction to the gender difference in childrearing practices where parents encouraged boys' education more than that of girls.

◇ *Wholehearted Encouragement*

Ishmael Contreras, a second generation man who served in the U.S. Army and earned a law degree after being injured in combat, instilled in his daughter Renata that education is a tool for mobility. Injured in service, Ishmael received a stipend for school expenses from the G.I. Bill, as well as "'rehabilitation' which is something like worker's compensation-type thing where they re-train you back into the workforce." The

Veteran's Administration paid for his re-training as a lawyer, since he could not longer perform the duties of his old job. Now a successful lawyer who earned his way into the middle class after a youth of poverty, Ishmael considers his family's progression, from his parents to his children:

The second generation looks for education. I think the first generation could see the value of it and was very encouraging as far as obtaining an education.... [For most of my siblings]...there has always been some progression to a better economic situation than agricultural work which is the bottom of the scale.

Q: For your children, what kind of trajectory do you think they're on?

Ishmael: I hope they become professionals just because that offers a lot of independence. And mobility. ...With a profession you call your own shots.

Education is a key to upward mobility. Ishmael's family went from agricultural labor in the first generation to a law degree in the next generation to at least a bachelor's degree in the third generation. Ishmael's daughter, Renata, learned the importance of education from her father. Ishmael self-consciously impressed his daughter with this value through stories of his hard-won education. Renata remarks, "the importance of education....came from both parents but more from my dad, just 'cuz he'd been through having nothing and putting himself through school and law school. He always really, really valued [education] and thought that can bring you *so* many opportunities, more than anything else." Education propelled Ishmael out of the agricultural fields, out of wartime operations, and into a profession where he earns a middle class living and is his own boss.

◇ *Skeptical Encouragement*

A number of second generation Mexican Americans who encountered obstacles to achieving educational goals were skeptical of the payoff of the school system for their children. While generally supportive of educational goals for their children, a dose of pragmatism (or cynicism) deriving from experience kept them from unqualified encouragement of a system that had treated them unequally a generation earlier.

Marcus Lopez, a fifty-seven year old second generation man, experienced the overt segregation of the 1950s and this seeped into his children's perspectives on school. Marcus's high school counselor actively discouraged him from honors classes and steered him into remedial and vocational classes solely because of his Mexican descent. As school authorities, counselors and administrators embodied the institutional power that enforced the overt racial/ethnic segregation. Marcus reviews his high school years:

My old [high school] counselor...told me I'd be nothing, that I should take nothing but shop class because that was all I was good for. That was all my people were good for: to be mechanics or cooks. ...That was one of my worst experiences because I was doing well in school and I wanted to get into honors classes. But when I went to see my counselor to ask him why I couldn't get harder classes, or more classes besides three periods of study hall and a shop class, I was told *by my counselor*: "take shop classes because your kind of people are good cooks and good mechanics."

Marcus did not finish high school but served in the U.S. Marine Corps, during which time he completed his GED and took some college courses. After completion of his military service, he visited his former high school and confronted that same school counselor:

I looked him straight in the eye and I said, "I want my diploma and I wanted it dated 1964." ...He just looked at me and he says, "well, I hope you learned to be a mechanic when you were in the service." [I said,] "No, I was an instructor. I *taught* guerilla warfare. And hopefully I helped some of the guys come back from Vietnam."

Marcus's reaction to his high school counselor's disdain was to achieve exactly *what he had been told he couldn't*. He succeeded both *in spite of* and *because of* the counselor's negative expectation. He took pleasure in showing off his status as a U.S. military instructor to precisely the person who was both a practical and symbolic obstacle. He petitioned the school board for a diploma, which he won. On a wider scale, his racially-centered hardships spurred him to agitate for social change by becoming active in the Brown Berets⁹⁵, a militant Chicano group born in the 1960s.

Low expectations of Mexican Americans' achievement are often disastrously successful at squelching ambition. In a fraction of cases, however, these sub-par expectations can be converted into a motivating force. While Marcus's is a success story against a system that was set against him, the material, psychological, and emotional hardship he endured in order to succeed should not be minimized. As Feagin (1991) notes, it is a substantial burden for minorities to straddle the line between being sensitive to "additive forms of discrimination" (both individual and group histories) and being paranoid as they assess present situations and calculate a response.

Marcus shared his story with his children and warned of the pitfalls of the school system while also upholding the value of education. My interview with Marcus was book-ended by platitudes about education. Marcus told me that when he was counseling his high school age son about career and education plans after high school graduation, he put it flatly: "you can either work at McDonald's, but why not own McDonald's?" Marcus believes that "education is power, pure power." Marcus achieved his GED while in the U.S. Marine Corps as well as got his high school degree upon petition. Marcus put aside his skepticism about the meritocracy of the school system as he instructed his

⁹⁵ See footnote #7 in Chapter Four for a description of the Brown Berets.

children about the value of education. Above all, Marcus claims, “mostly what I taught [my children] is that you have to work hard, it’s not free. It’s not served to you.” This ethic of working hard is born from experience: one must combat stereotypes, prove one’s self, and transcend barriers through determination. As a consequence, Marcus drove his children hard to succeed, too hard, he admits retrospectively. Tony, Marcus’s son, learned the lessons his father taught him. Tony did not just learn the didactic principles his father self-consciously tried to pass on, but the also lessons that were transmitted through his tales of hardship and blocked opportunities in high school. Marcus’s stories had a formative effect on Tony, but Tony heard more than the well-intended refrains about the “power” education provides. Marcus’s autobiographical stories seeped into Tony’s consciousness at the same rate as his principled instruction, lessening the impact Marcus’s optimism.

Raised in part by his maternal grandparents, Tony dropped out of high school in 10th grade, barely able to read or write, in part because of some of the skepticism he picked up from his father about the unfairness of the system. However, Tony heard not only his father’s complaints about education but also the value of determination and hard work. Thus, Tony joined the military at age twenty without a high school diploma. Through working hard on the job he achieved rank quickly and, not letting his lack of formal education stop him, earned his GED, like his father.

Second generation parents were regularly confronted with negative stereotypes in school. They naturally suspected that their offspring would be up against similar unflattering preconceived notions. Fully aware of the stereotypes they encountered, these parents were very realistic in the goals of social decorum, good grades, and propriety they

established for their children. Two illustrations from the second generation cohort make this point, including Tina Acevedo who offers instruction to her children: “Hold your head up high, be on honor roll. Show people what you’re made of. The stereotype that we’re all dropping out of school or not showing up, that doesn’t fit this family. That’s not tolerated. We have a standard that we follow.” In the same vein, Tyler Mendoza refers to his parents’ motivation for him to rebut society’s low expectations:

My parents always pushed school, school, school, school. So I had to do better in school[.] ...C’s were not that good, you get A’s and B’s. C’s meant that you could do better. So, they always pushed from day one that I had to do better in school. I knew I had to try harder.... I had to try harder and prove that I wasn’t one of those dumb lazy Mexicans or the ones that are going to drop out and get somebody pregnant[.]

This realistic encouragement for school reflects a sizeable portion of the second generation’s orientation toward the school system and their children. Taking their own lived experience into account, they are diffident about offering “wholehearted encouragement.” Yet, they desire the best for their children and are aware that an education helps unlock doors of opportunity. Also wanting to shield their offspring from social slights, they proffer pragmatic advice or biographical narratives that both caution and fortify their children.

◇ *Pointed Encouragement*

In immigrant families supportive of education, male children were often offered the opportunity and resources for school in preference to female children. In part as a consequence of lack of encouragement in their youth, the second generation developed a strategy of “pointed encouragement” when parenting their own children. Yolanda Segura recalls how her father ridiculed her desire to go to college:

I never finished my college education and part of that was because of opportunity and environment. ...When I started to go to college right after high school, my dad sort of ridiculed it and was you know, “What do you need that for? ...You don’t need that.” And not having good study habits or really not knowing how to survive in college and not having the right people to guide me to was what deterred me the most.

In particular, Yolanda remembers how her experience was influenced both by race and gender. She connects how her parents digested societal assumptions about Mexican immigrants and their families and how this influenced her gendered upbringing as a “Mexican girl”:

There was always the people out there that just made assumptions about your skin color and your country;...that we weren’t smart enough. ...Certainly some of those [assumptions] were internalized by my parents bringing us up because there was this sense of you had to be humble and...being a Mexican girl...that you had your place in life.

Yolanda grew up in a traditional home and also describes her marital home as “very traditional”; she is the full-time mother of three girls and her husband, a high level executive of a large public relations firm, is the sole income earner. She wanted an education, though she never finished her college degree, and her husband, with two master’s degrees and an upward occupational trajectory, further convinced her of the value of education. Fueled by her husband’s conviction as well as her own, she was committed to encouraging her three female children in their academic lives.

Remembering how her father discouraged her educational dreams, Yolanda crafted a parenting style reflecting the way she *would have liked to be* supported. Yolanda refers to her experience with her parents as she draws a distinction between that parent-child relationship and the relationship she is trying to foster with her children:

Back to my own kids is that I didn't want them to feel that way [ridiculed, unsupported] at all. ...From Day One I always told them "when you finish college" as opposed to "when you finish high school." Whereas in my own family it was "when you finish high school."

Yolanda is active in the Parent-Teacher Association at her children's schools and helps to organize extra-curricular events like talent shows, yet another way she demonstrates her commitment to her children's educational agenda. Yolanda's hope is that, by changing the treatment of her children from how she was treated as a child, she can modify her daughters' experience and improve their educational outcomes.⁹⁶

Factors outside of one's generationally-specific experience in school also influence ideologies concerning schooling. For example, Beatrice Madrigal instructed her daughter, Reyna, to get a college education in order to earn economic independence. Beatrice did not base this instruction on her own educational experience, but on the connection she draws between her limited education and her difficulty supporting herself after her divorce from her husband. What came across most clearly in Beatrice's interview was not her sense of race or ethnicity but her sense of strength as a woman. Beatrice separated from her husband when she learned he had another family outside the marriage. As Reyna watched her mother learn to be strong, independent and assertive, Reyna said that she learned by example and took those lessons to heart. Reyna says:

[My mom]...taught us to be responsible people.... When she broke up with my father—I might have been like twelve—she started teaching us how to be really independent and not to rely on anyone. And to take care of yourself and...I think that is why I went off to college.

JMV: Really?

⁹⁶ Second generation Mexican American women employ "pointed encouragement" not just for their daughters but also for their sons as well.

Reyna: Yeah, because she was a stay at home and when my dad left she had to go to work because my dad didn't give her any help or support. ...That is what she has taught us: "Well, you need to work to take care of yourself. You have needs and you support yourself." And then she had said, "You should go out to college." And, you know, she started talking about "so you don't have to rely on a man," and then she had started talking about what had happened to her.

So, the lesson that passed between the generations of Madrigal women is not about race or ethnicity, but about gender. Lessons of gender, as well as of race, can involve teachings about how education is a pathway toward independence, emotional as well as economic.

◇ *Community-Based Encouragement*

Rafael Treviño uses community outreach as a way to resist and repair the differential treatment he experienced in school. Rafael's encouragement expanded beyond the parent-child relationship and reached into the community. While supportive of his three children's education, the bulk of his encouragement was directed toward the community and his employees. Recall that Rafael, as discussed in Chapter Four, opened a health organization in the 1960s that was originally geared to the Latino population but has since broadened its clientele. Rafael speculates as to the reason for the lack of school support in his own youth:

I wasn't set on the right track. You know, when I went to school and I went to a counselor's office to get guidance, there wasn't a time when they sat down with you and said, "Look, Rafael, you need to get yourself an education. You can become a lawyer. You can become a doctor. You can become a biologist. An astrologist. An astronomer.

Whatever!” They could have motivated me. They could have given me some ideas. But they didn’t. Because I wasn’t one of the chosen. ...They didn’t build my self confidence. Instead they were telling me what I couldn’t do....

JMV: You mentioned you weren’t a chosen one. Were there chosen ones? Who were they?

Rafael: Oh, I think so. They were all white counselors. They’re going to help their own people. I’m a Latino, right. And when I see Latinos that need help, there’s a desire to help them more. Because they’re one of your own. Even though you shouldn’t really feel that way. It’s just like having children. There’s nothing wrong with having more love for one than the other. Doesn’t mean that you don’t love ‘em. It’s just that there’s some connection, some feel, that’s a little bit more intimate with one than there is the other. It’s nothing to feel guilty about, it’s natural. Just don’t be unjust with the others.... I think that’s what used to happen with counselors that were white. They’d see their own people come through and I think they would open up the doors a little bit wider and give a little bit more opportunity. And, when I come around, or other people like me, the door wasn’t as wide.... That’s what’s key about getting our own people in those positions.⁹⁷ So that they could open the door up a little bit for us and maybe have the same feel.

In this rich excerpt, Rafael naturalizes the propensity for affection and resource allocation based on race. His reply to white institutions that give preferential treatment to white clients is to set up Latino-oriented organizations that will operate similarly, with the understanding that doing so is to try to augment Latinos’ skills and station in life. Rafael’s beliefs fall into a camp with social theorists before him who fought for minority

⁹⁷ Rafael went on to say explicitly and carefully that “the only problem...is that sometimes you put a Latino in a position [of power and] they act in reverse in order to please the white man. That’s the old plantation mentality. What the white man used to do in the plantations is that he would find an African among the group who he knew, if he put him in a position of power, he would treat his own people worse than the white man would.” As social theorists concerned with self-determination Carmichael, Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton. 1992. *Black Power: The politics of liberation in America*. New York: Vintage Books, Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press, —. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press., Rafael was wary of those Latinos who might take the “racial bribe” Guinier, Lani and Gerald Torres. 2002. *The Miner’s Canary: Enlisting race, resisting power, transforming democracy*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. and once in a position of authority and responsibility neglect Latino interests.

groups' economic, political, and cultural self-determination (Carmichael and Hamilton 1992; Fanon 1963; Fanon 1967).

This tendency to want to give back to Latino communities crosscuts the second and third generations. Ricardo Torres, a third generation Mexican American man not yet a father, came from a low-income community and was attending UC Berkeley. Much like Rafael Treviño, Ricardo Torres transformed his experience with discrimination within the school system into a desire to work within the system itself and change it from within. He is concerned with minority representation and success, wanting to “see more *raza* [race, specifically Mexicans] come up.” As with other interviewees who desired to mentor minorities or be community advocates, Ricardo sought a balance between helping Mexican Americans and aiding everyone who sought his assistance:

There's a sentimental value in helping the people who have the same ancestry. I don't know if it's a justified one, but it's there. And I can't lie that I want to see more brown faces here in [UC] Berkeley, or just successful in general. But at the same time, I'm not gonna be like, 'you're white, I'm not going to teach you,' or, 'you're Chinese, get outta here!' That's not me at all. I'd like to go beyond teaching too, I'd like to be more wide-scale than the classroom and give the biggest voice I possibly can.

While parenting strategies are one way to sculpt the attitudes, personality, and achievements of the next generation, some interviewees found their chosen community to be an appropriate audience for their life lessons.

Third Generation Mexican Americans: The Youth

→ *Experiences in School*

Discrimination is dynamic: forms of discrimination are contextual and refract political, economic, and cultural arrangements. In the post-civil rights era, discrimination became embedded in institutional practices and the fabric of everyday life. A number of terms and definitions attempting to capture post-Jim Crow period racism have entered the modern lexicon, offering different perspectives. I find the notion of institutional discrimination to be most convincing because it holds civic and social institutions responsible for discriminatory behaviors that run wider and deeper than personal prejudice.

Modern-day forms of racism and discrimination are qualitatively different than before the civil rights era. State mandated racial segregation has been replaced by covert forms of discrimination. In the educational experiences of third generation Mexican Americans in the mid-1970s and later, this means that separate school buildings or outright school administration disregard have been replaced by school tracking systems, low expectations for minority performance based on negative stereotypes, and classroom curriculum that devalues non-European-American “subjugated knowledges” (Collins 1991).

Third generation Mexican Americans complained of being (nearly) trapped in tracking systems. Those who escaped were those whose parents rigorously oversaw their schooling and engaged the school administration when necessary. Regardless of region in California, a sizeable portion of third generation Mexican American students reported a severe tracking system in place in their schools. Seventeen-year-old Andrew Rosenberg captures the role of race in school tracking systems. Andrew refers to the racialized sorting patterns behind student placement in high school classrooms:

“Oh, he’s Mexican—put him in that class.” It’s really kind of how it is. It’s really bad. I don’t think it’s that intentional. But if you’re Mexican and you walk into a class of all white people, it’s like—oh, this is the GATE [Gifted and Talented Education] class. I don’t belong here. When really a lot of those Mexicans who are in the normal classes should be in the GATE classes. And some of the people who are in GATE classes shouldn’t be at all...most of them are just cheating their way through. So a lot of people don’t even deserve to be in it. But I think the counselors feel too afraid to put a white kid in a normal class, because the parents would probably get mad or the kid would be like—what am I doing in this class? So I think a lot of people just automatically get put in these classes. They say—oh, you need to keep a “B” grade or whatever to stay in GATE classes. But a lot of people are failing these classes, but they still get put back in there anyway.

While maybe not “intentional,” the school persists in internally segregating the classrooms.

Hector Avila was funneled into a racialized tracking system that Andrew Rosenberg was able to avoid. Hector offers an extreme example: he was tracked into an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom when he was already fluent in English and Spanish. Because ESL classrooms focus on acquiring English language skills, Hector’s educational progress was stunted because he was placed in a classroom that was well below his aptitude. I asked if he felt any key events shaped his sense of racial or ethnic identity, to which Hector responded:

I can remember one thing that made me upset.... See, I was born in the United States and I spoke perfect English and I also spoke Spanish. So I probably spoke better Spanish when I was younger, but I also spoke very good English, as well. ...[W]hen I moved to Serra Vista [Arizona]⁹⁸...they [the school] automatically put me in ESL. Even though I spoke perfect English. I don’t think my parents, at the time, really paid attention or understood what that was. So, instead of going to regular English class, I got behind in English because they were putting me in ESL.... And then the teacher wasn’t smart enough to say, “hey, this kid speaks English and Spanish....” They just put me there with these Mexican kids...who

⁹⁸ Hector Avila is the one interviewee who spent the majority of his primary and secondary education in a state other than California.

didn't speak any English. This...was through all of second grade[.] I struggled a little bit with English classes [later] because I think I got a little behind. Now, I look back at it and I go, "that really pissed me off that they did that. What the hell is their problem?"

As a second grader, Hector didn't figure out that he had been misplaced in the ESL classroom. He thought, "wow, I get pulled out of class for an hour to go to this place where there's all these other Mexican kids and I had fun talking to them. And I spoke to them in Spanish." Because he was fluent in Spanish and English he would get all the answers to the lessons, leading to boredom. One repercussion of not being challenged in the classroom was that he started to act out and thus got pinpointed as possibly having Attention Deficit Disorder [ADD]:

I became a little bit disruptive in elementary school because I don't think I was being challenged because I was...put in this [ESL] class.... They were like, "We think he had ADD because he's not doing well in English." But yet in all the other class, like math, it was real easy for me.... Then they did some more tests and they were like, "oh, we're sorry, we're wrong."

Once Hector was correctly placed in appropriate level classrooms, he did well, earning straight-A's in middle school.

Relationships with school administrators mirror the racialized tracking system: Whites and Asians get the majority of positive attention while Latinos and Blacks often aren't able to foster this same type rapport and instead get disregard or negative attention.⁹⁹ Veronica Guzman tells me about how she and her dark-skinned brother have a markedly different relationship with their high school Vice Principal than does their light-skinned, dark-blonde haired sister:

⁹⁹ While this is a generalization, it holds true for my sample and has been documented elsewhere Davidson, Ann Locke. 1996. *Making and Molding Identity in Schools: student narratives on race, gender, and academic engagement*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.. I could have gotten this impression because respondents were quick to cite to instances when they felt they were unfairly treated. While I certainly heard praise for school administrators, I didn't quiz my respondents on this point precisely and thus I don't have enough data to unequivocally make this claim.

My sister, she's light skinned, she looks American, but she's a Mexican American. The Vice Principal thought she was white. They [the administration] didn't know that my brother and sister and I were related. And they would send information for her in English and for my brother they would send it in Spanish. She's blonde and according to them she's a *guera* [white woman] and he's *mexicano*, Mexican. The vice principal treated her differently because she was a blonde, she was a *guera*. When they found out she was Hispanic, she was a Mexican, it wasn't the same anymore.

This starkly different treatment for siblings of the same family powerfully reinforced Veronica's sense of racial identity. Veronica's response was to distrust the administration. While she called in her mother to speak to the principal on her behalf, after which relations improved, a lesson she learned from school during this time was the salience of race—or even the appearance of race—in obtaining school resources and support.

Classroom curriculum is another way in which the educational institution determines which races and cultures are “legitimate” and deserve scholastic attention. In so doing, school re-instantiate the disequilibria of societal power dynamics. The sociology of culture and education literatures have since the 1970s discussed the power politics that operate behind decisions of what kinds of content merit inclusion into disciplinary canons (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1979). Educational institutions possess tremendous capacity to reproduce the power structure and racial hierarchy of society. Classroom curriculum is not neutral but political. National curricula and canonized scholarship represents a “*selective tradition...some group's vision of legitimate knowledge [that] is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people*” (Apple 1996: 22). Rather than remaining entrenched in white supremacist, masculinist, and imperialist

ideologies of old, schools can positively transform future social and race relations by changing classroom pedagogy and traditional epistemologies. bell hooks calls for “excitement” in the classroom which is a condition for, as well as a byproduct of, Paulo Freire’s “concientization,” or critical awareness and engagement (Freire 1970; hooks 1994). hooks envisions a feminist and racially-conscious classroom wherein students are critical and active and knowledge is stripped of its dominant-class politics.

The multicultural education project of the 1970s developed in response to America’s changing demographics and a growing need for schools and curriculum to incorporate students of color.¹⁰⁰ Race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation (Winant 2000). Since schools make decisions on how racial groups are represented both structurally (faculty and student body composition) and academically (course content and course offerings), they are fertile loci for (re)teaching and (re)learning about race.

Third generation Mexican Americans voiced dismay over not seeing their experience reflected in official school curriculum. My respondents echoed the sentiments of education theorist Henry Giroux who decries the omissions of “master narratives and hegemonic discourses that make up the official curriculum” and demands integration of “the self-representations of subordinated groups as they might appear in ‘forgotten’ histories, texts, memories, experiences, and community narratives” (Giroux 1992). Araceli Treviño offers her story of frustration in high school with seeing the history of Latinos and women excised from her world history class:

I remember going to our [world history] text book and...going through the section in there where they talk about Mexican Americans and César Chávez and farm worker's struggle and in that same chapter there was...lesbians and gays, [women's rights,] and Puerto Ricans, different ethnicities in this one chapter.... Whatever the minority stuff was, [it] was all [in] this one lump sum chapter. And I was so excited.... "Okay, let's learn!" ...We get to it and [the teacher] goes, "we're skipping this chapter. We're going to the Reagan years." I was like, "what!" I was so bummed. I was so bummed and I asked him, "why? Why do we have to skip this chapter?" And he said that the Reagan years are more important. And I said "to who?" And we got into a little conversation and I remember going home crying, crying to my parents about how I was so mad that he felt the Reagan years were so important than this one little section.... It was maybe three or four pages on Latin America. ...I remember it being such a huge issue and...we had a meeting with the principal. So he ended up teaching that next. And it ended up being in the final but I remember it was such a stir and I was so hurt. I just remember being so hurt about [how] he could say that it wasn't important.... And how [he] could say that is not important considering that there is a lot of Mexican American kids in that school[.]

In the end, Araceli won her appeal to the high school principal and the teacher apologized for saying that world history chapter on women, gays and lesbians, and racial minorities was not significant. Araceli actively challenged her teacher and the curriculum arrangement at large because she found that a master narrative that excludes minorities of various varieties was overtaking her group history. The consequences of her observation and resistance empowered her sense of racial and ethnic identity and emboldened her sense of entitlement to "subjugated knowledge" (Collins 1991).

To be included in classroom curriculum is to be deemed legitimate and valuable. Most of my respondents who directly discussed multicultural education were proponents of it. As education systems determine how to handle questions of race in classroom curriculum and pedagogy as well as issues of classroom and structural diversity, they are endowing race and racial categories with varying significances, power, and positionality.

Affirmative Action: Pushing the Door Ajar

Affirmative action policies were drafted in the 1960s and 1970s to improve underrepresented minorities' access to education and employment. Thus far this chapter has detailed the historically-coded ways in which the school system has made Mexican Americans keenly aware of their racial identity. After arguing that second and third generation Mexican Americans suffered overt and covert discrimination, respectively, I now outline the ways in which affirmative action policies benefited the third generation. Affirmative action policies opened doors to education and jobs that might otherwise have remained closed. Some third generation Mexican Americans enthusiastically “checked the box” while others were reluctant to do so. Considering one’s ethnic claim in a situation with pecuniary consequences was often a struggle and the responses to this quandary varied widely (See also Jimenez 2004). For those who claimed minority status, receiving affirmative action benefits only reinforced their identity as *ethnic* Americans for those third generation beneficiaries (particularly for those of mixed ethnicity).

Respondents who claimed that they were beneficiaries of affirmative action policies claimed that these policies “opened the door” to higher education. They were all quick to declare that they were indeed qualified for admission. In their view, affirmative action encouraged admissions committees to consider their applications more holistically, taking their (sometimes multiple) disadvantages more seriously than without such a policy in place. As Cristina Talavera expresses, “Affirmative action...opened the door. While I had good grades, it’s just I was also working in high school, too. ...It just really opened the door so that I could show what I had to show.” Cristina, like many college-bound minority students of the late 1990s and the new millennium, felt a backlash after the passage of California’s Proposition 209 in November 1996, effectively halting

affirmative action policies in public institutions, including the University of California.¹⁰¹ Cristina notes, “when I went to go apply for law school—which was the first year that it was revoked—I felt it really worked against me. I mean, I could sit there and scream in my essay all I wanted...but at the same time I felt like the door wasn’t even open for anyone to hear me speak.” No one can say whether Cristina would have gotten into law school under affirmative action, but it has been well publicized that the University of California’s law school admissions of minority students plummeted after the passage of Proposition 209. Far from making the issue of race disappear, in Cristina’s case at least, the repeal of affirmative action seems to have heightened her sense of ethnic disadvantage.

Tony Lopez, a third generation Mexican American working for a police department as a community liaison, makes the point that given the influx of Latinos from Mexico and other Latin American countries, his ethnic background and bilingual abilities are in demand:

I think my race has kicked open doors, huge doors, for me to move up and become a very prosperous individual. As far as getting into new jobs, new promotions, new positions. I think because I’m Hispanic and because I’m willing to work hard, I think it has kicked open a lot of doors for me. I think that I’ve been given a lot of chances based on not just the fact that I’m Hispanic but that I work hard and that I get things done.

¹⁰¹ Selected portions of Section 31 added to Article I of the California Constitution follows: (a) The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting. (f) For the purposes of this section, "state" shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the state itself, any city, county, city and county, public university system, including the University of California, community college district, school district, special district, or any other political subdivision or governmental instrumentality of or within the state. (<http://vote96.ss.ca.gov/Vote96/html/BP/209text.htm>, accessed on 11/10/05).

Akin to Cristina Talavera's notion of "show[ing] what I had to show" once inside, Tony's "willing[ness] to work hard" legitimates his occupational placement. By saying that he works hard, Tony sends the message that affirmative action opens doors to those who are industrious and deserving. Lance Morelos, who spoke regarding business entrepreneurship, wanted to defend affirmative action from misconceptions: "There is no free lunch. It's not 'if you're female or a minority here's a check.' People don't realize that; that's not the way it is." These discursive moves head off the conservative critique that affirmative action goes to the "undeserving poor" and the underclass whose problems are bred from cultural pathologies rather than macro-structural issues (Steele 1990; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997).

Jillian Rosenberg is one of a handful of third generation Mexican Americans I interviewed who had one European-descent parent. The question of "whether or not to check the box" on college and medical school applications threw her into ethnic identity pandemonium. Affirmative action programs assume that to be a racial/ethnic or gender minority is to be historically, if not currently, oppressed. Some people, such Jillian, do mental and emotional contortions in order to figure out what it means to be a minority (or *half* a racial/ethnic minority) but to have achieved middle class socioeconomic standing. When I met her, Jillian was attending Yale University and considering applying to medical school. She had marked that she was a racial/ethnic minority when applying to Yale, yet felt unsure as to whether she was exploiting her background, and was facing a similar predicament regarding medical school applications:

I definitely had a struggle with how I feel about affirmative action type stuff, because I know that when I'm applying to med school being Mexican is going to

help me in. I know that it helped me get into Yale. I know there were a lot of really good things that I did and I deserve to be there, but I know that it [being Mexican] played a part. ...I felt like I was exploiting it.... So, it's just hard.

On the whole, respondents who received affirmative action benefits were grateful. Their tacit understanding is that while they encountered both institutional and public discrimination, race relations in the United States improved slightly from that which their parents experienced. While this chapter has demonstrated the ways in which both institutional mechanisms and historical context shape racial formation, state policies such as affirmative action help ameliorate racial inequality. With the passage of Proposition 209 in California in 1996, however, state enforced affirmative action in public institutions was dismantled. As the state and nation struggle with how to repair historical and contemporary racial power imbalances and injustices, it is important to think about the ways in which the state and other institutions have a formative hand in both creating and, alternatively, eradicating racial inequalities.

Conclusion

I have made three inter-related arguments in this chapter. First, while schools are a racializing agent for all three generations, students and their families are not mere social sponges. Rather, families play a profoundly important role in shaping students' experience with the process of racial formation. Moreover, family ideologies clearly reflect parents' own experiences in their educational and family systems. Second, students' perceptions of their racial identity are partially dependent on historical era. How students understand themselves as Mexican American, and their place in the American racial hierarchy are deeply affected by changing social context. Third, gender

ideologies are thoroughly intertwined with the process of racial formation. Finally, I make an additional point below about the relative academic success of the second and third generations, arguing that this is evidence for “selective assimilation.”

Scholarly literature recognizes that race is a social construction and that race is performed in interaction. Schools and other social arenas play a major role in this process. Yet, previous studies have failed to portray the dynamism of the relationship between families and schools in racial identity formation. People do not merely absorb racial messages from school. Parents deploy particular family ideologies that change across generations based on their own unique sets of experiences in schools and their natal families.

Historical context is also significant. Changing socio-political environments mean that the racial messages conveyed by institutions and families will also shift. One interesting constant is the linkage of education as key to achieving the American Dream, though the immigrant generation advocated this ideology with a gender bias. I claim that the education of the second generation was marked by overt Jim Crow style segregation while the third generation was typified by a more covert institutional discrimination. While these ideologies are not clearly defined by time period and likely coexisted, the primary distinction between the two eras is the degree of intensity of segregation and prejudice. Second generation Mexican Americans attended school in unequal school buildings and were oftentimes barred from access to “white” schools or advanced classes. Distinct from the overt discrimination typical of the 1950s and 1960s, third generation Mexican Americans, educated in the 1970s and 1990s, had school experiences that were marked by covert discrimination. School tracking systems racially/ethnically segregated

students in classrooms (though the school student body might be racially diverse) and classroom curricula upheld mainstream American cultural knowledge as valuable, ignoring minority forms of knowledge. While the form of discrimination varies with the historical period, the chief lesson that race is an important aspect of one's social identity remained constant. This made second generation Mexican American students, in particular, view their race as a social identity feature to be *managed*—to pass, to downplay, to assert, to subvert. This recognition played into the teaching strategies they developed once they became parents.

Racial identity formation does not work exactly the same for females and males, as families and schools bore different expectations for youth based on their gender. Immigrants were inclined to exclude women (wives and daughters) based on patriarchal expectations. The second generation females' experience in schools moderated the effect of lack of familial support: despite overt segregation, school officials were more disposed to mentor and advance female students than male students. At the same time, immigrant parents' placed more emphasis on boys' education yet these young males faced more barriers from schools. Combining these experiences from home and school results in particular parenting strategies used to coach the third generation. Three parenting styles evolved, with "pointed encouragement" reflecting female parents' desire to furnish direct encouragement to their children (especially daughters) based on what they would have liked to receive in their own youth.

Educational outcomes,¹⁰² while not central to the analysis presented here, deserve some attention. Educational attainment, which in part reflects changing socio-political milieus as well as shifting parenting styles, has risen in each successive generation.

¹⁰² See Table 5.1.

College degrees have at least doubled from the second to the third generation (with no college degrees in the first generation). The third generation is on pace to meet or exceed their parents' educational levels. While this chapter has focused less on scholastic achievement than the racial and racializing components of both school and home lives, this also speaks to the debate surrounding whether Mexican Americans have experienced stalled assimilation versus intergenerational progress. While my data cannot speak directly to this question, evidence suggests that Mexican Americans are following a "selective assimilation" or "selective acculturation" pathway (Gibson 1988; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou and Bankston 1998). While there is much variation with regard to degree of Mexican cultural engagement, the Mexican American families I interviewed were structurally assimilated and performing very well within American institutions, such as education. As such, "cultural maintenance" and "thinned attachment" families vary according to their levels of commitment to Mexican culture yet they are indistinguishable in their levels of academic achievement.

Finally, it is interesting to consider how social forces that impinge upon the third generation steer this generation's racial self-concept and may inform their future parenting strategies. The third generation's experience of family support (qualified for not) for education and their experiences in school of covert discrimination and struggles over multicultural curricula and affirmative action have undoubtedly forced them to deliberate about their racial identities. We turn next to the third generation, where I investigate the various social spheres that influence this generation's racial self-perceptions.

CHAPTER SIX

THIRD GENERATION MEXICAN AMERICANS: INTO THE FUTURE

“A notable and intriguing feature of race is its ubiquity, its presence in both the smallest and the largest features of social relationships, institutions, and identities.”
(Winant 2000: 181)

Nearly seven million people are third-plus generation Mexican Americans (Macias 2006: 6), yet there is great *diversity* and *fluidity* within this group regarding how they classify themselves. This chapter analyses how the contradictory forces of “flexible ethnicity” and “racialization” influence how third generation Mexican Americans identify. “Flexible ethnicity” refers to the ability to deftly and effectively navigate different racial terrains and be considered an “insider” in more than one racial or ethnic group. “Racialization,” by contrast, refers to the process of suppressing and distancing people perceived as non-white. In this case, other peoples’ expectations and enforcement of difference creates or reproduces social distance and unequal power dynamics. Moreover, regardless of whether Mexican Americans experience their racial/ethnic identity to be more “flexible” or “racialized,” they will most likely encounter challenges to their racial “authenticity.” This chapter is organized in four sections. First, I examine the diversity of racial/ethnic claims third generation Mexican Americans make. Second, I develop the concept of “flexible ethnicity.” Third, I analyze the process of racialization. Finally, I discuss the issue of racial authenticity and the dynamism of culture, especially with regard to gender roles.

A number of scholars have addressed the *subjective* experience of race. For instance, Herbert Gans (1979) put forth the notion of “symbolic ethnicity,” the proposition that as acculturation takes place, the new manner of ethnic involvement will revolve around the use of ethnic symbols. This “ethnicity of last resort” will be more “expressive” rather than “instrumental” in its function in people’s lives, more of a leisure activity or “nostalgic allegiance” than a regulatory mechanism (Gans 1979: 9). Gans laid out a rational choice model wherein ethnics conduct a cost-benefit analysis of “acting ethnic”—what costs it will levy and what benefits it will confer. This model explains why first generation immigrants hide their ethnicity in order to achieve upward mobility and avoid ethnic scapegoating. Gans assumes that ethnic minorities can freely choose how and when to be ethnic, voluntarily adopting or shedding ethnic symbols as they please: “Ethnicity, now that it is respectable and no longer a major cause of conflict, seems therefore to be ideally suited to serve as a distinguishing characteristic” (Gans 1979: 16). Symbolic ethnicity will be the dominant form of ethnicity for the third and later generations once they have become upwardly mobile. In an epilogue to his original article, Gans underscored that he was theorizing the experience of white European ethnic groups, conceding that his theory may be limited when applied to ethnic groups within other racial groups due to dissimilar experiences with racism (Gans 1996: 453, 457). Scholarship on Mexican Americans argues that this particular ethnic identity is not voluntary but imposed (Ochoa 2004).

More recently, Mary Waters (1990) also found that white ethnics in America attach symbolically to their ethnic background. White ethnics experience an ethnicity that is voluntary and essentially meaningless in the way it structures their lives, except for

ways in which they choose to engage it (language, marital choice, family traditions, passing knowledge onto children). Later-generation white ethnics experience their ethnicity as an “ethnic option” rather than an ascribed characteristic. An obvious limit to Waters’ work, which I extend here, is that it deals exclusively with people of European ancestry. “Ethnic options” are delimited for racial and ethnic minorities who have less freedom to highlight or downplay their heritage.

Social context is relevant to how people amplify or downplay their ethnicity. “Situational ethnicity” suggests that actors subjectively evaluate the behavioral options available within a particular objective setting. While racial ascriptions lead to behavioral expectations of the categorized party (Okamura 1981: 455), ethnicity is not always a voluntary feature of identity. Scholars have since applied “situational ethnicity” to Latinos, contending that a degree of agency—within limits—exists for this group (Flores-Gonzales 1999). Julie Bettie’s work (2003) with Mexican American and White high school girls in California underscores that phenotype and surname restrict one’s agency and “ethnic options.” Bettie argues that “one’s race performance was *expected* to correspond to a perceived racial ‘essence,’ marked by color and surname” (Bettie 2003: 85).

Social identities are not created in a vacuum, but are developed in relation to those in one’s institutional and social surroundings. Treatment by white mainstream society is crucial in articulating ethnic identities—as was discussed in Chapters Four and Five—yet in a “minority majority” state like California, intra-ethnic relations are also very influential. In his investigation of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant relations in California and Texas, David Gutierrez (1995) found two dominant modes of

relationship. First, Mexican Americans feel threatened by Mexican immigrants due to increased economic competition and the possible reinforcement of negative racial stereotypes. At the same time, Mexican Americans see a version of themselves in the Mexican immigrants and feel bonds of culture and kinship. On the other hand, Mexican immigrants critique Mexican Americans as having “lost their culture” (Gutiérrez 1995). Gilda Ochoa (2004), in her study of the relationship between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants in southern California, argues these relationships fall along a “continuum of conflict and solidarity” (Ochoa 2004). These works concentrate on Mexican Americans’ views of Mexican immigrants. What I analyze below are the ways in which interactions with Mexican immigrants and other Mexican Americans impinge upon the racial identity formation of third generation Mexican Americans.

The scholarly literature is undecided about whether to categorize Latinos as a race or ethnicity. As discussed in Chapter One, whether Latinos have been recognized as a race or ethnic group has been dependent on historical era. Currently, scholars remain divided as to how to classify and discuss this group. Regarding Latinos/Hispanics, scholarly opinions range from classifying this group as a race (Flores-Gonzales 1999), an ethnic group (as the U.S. Census did in 1980, 1990, and 2000), a “pan-ethnic minority group” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), or even a combination race/ethnicity where no line is drawn (Lee and Bean 2004; Ochoa 2004). Researchers are equally divided about how to classify Mexican Americans. Some scholars regard Mexican Americans as a race (Acuna 2000; Ortiz 1996), as did the U.S. Census in 1930 (but never before and never since). Others consider Mexican Americans an ethnic group (Chavez 1992; Jimenez 2004; Macias 2006; Skerry 1993; Smith 2003). Others take a political-historical perspective to

argue that Mexican Americans are both a distinct ethnic population *and* a “socially supposed race” when “subjected to policies of discrimination or control” (Montejano 1987: 4-5). Yet another scholar straddles the race or ethnicity question by theorizing Mexican Americans as a “racialized ethnic group” (Telles).

Variety of Racial and Ethnic Labels

The scholarship is divided on how to classify Latinos and Mexican Americans. There is also much confusion and indecision within the group itself as to how to define itself (Oboler 1995). This ambivalence is clear in how my third generation Mexican American respondents’ racially/ethnically identify. Respondents offered a range of answers from “Chicano,” “Hispanic,” “Latino,” “Mexican,” and “Mexican American,” to detailed ratios of their heritage such as “half-Mexican, half-Italian” or “Mexican/Polish/Swedish/Russian/Jewish.” Third generation Mexican Americans identify in a wide variety of ways, often using multiple labels and shifting them depending on social context. Among the most important factors shaping self-title decisions are California’s geographic proximity to Mexico, the demographics of California, and continuous flow of immigration from Mexico, points largely ignored by other scholars.

Marisol Fuentes ruled out several possible choices before deciding upon “Mexican American” as the most fitting identifier. For her, this process began (and continues) through informal personal interactions. One day in high school the issue of racial self-titles was a topic of discussion:

[My teacher] gave us a list of all these different terms, like “Hispanic,” “Latino,” “Chicano,” “Mexican American,” “Mexican”...all those words and little

definitions [of] what they meant. I remember seeing “Mexican American”: it said something like being born in the United States but still like having Mexican traditions but being more Americanized. I was like, “okay, I guess that’s me.” Because the other terms were like “Chicano,” people who were involved in the ‘60s and I’m like “no.” Then “Mexicans,” people who are from Mexico, and I would say, “okay, that’s not me.” “Latino”—I don’t know what the heck it said— Latin American or something. I’m like “no.” “Hispanic,” I don’t know what it said for Hispanic. The only thing that I found [myself] closest to was Mexican American. That makes sense because...I’m Mexican culturally and ethnic-wise.... [Yet] I felt like Americanized.... A lot of credit...towards being American was my dad...being in Vietnam. [He served] this country and I feel like I have to give some kind of credit to being American because even though he didn’t go like voluntarily, he was still drafted. I feel like it’s my responsibility in a way to say that I am American because my dad went to fight an American war. I think that has to do with why I started calling myself “Mexican American” and where the “American” came from. Because the “Mexican” I totally knew.

Marisol evaluates the range of identity options to determine the label that makes the most sense to her. She finds that “Mexican American” suits her because it is a middle ground between Mexican and American and honors both identities.

Third generation Mexican Americans, who are too young to have been participants in the Chicano Movement but whose parents were alive at the time, had divergent opinions on whether or not they liked the term “Chicano/a.” Those in favor of the term thought of it as an empowering self-definition that implied value and dignity. Those who did not like the term considered it low-class or out-dated. Caitlyn Benavidas understands “Chicano/a” to be a political label that refers to someone of Mexican descent born in the United States (heritage plus nativity):

I definitely consider myself completely culturally Mexican but Chicano is because I was born here. I...politically identify as Chicano and Chicana, like my parents did in politics. My own meaning [of Chicano/a] is mostly being that I was born in the United States and that I have ancestors from the Southwest on both sides of my family. Also just the politicalness behind it—having parents that were part of the [Chicano] Movement.

As one might expect, the children of Chicano Movement activists were more inclined to claim a “Chicano” identity than children of non-activists. Carmina Dos Santos’ parents were active in the Chicano Movement, using their home for Chicano artist and activist meetings:

My parents were always Chicanos. They were active during the Chicano Movement.... They are Chicano activist so they raised us [my brother and I] with a strong sense of larger community purpose as connected to our ethnicity.... “Chicana” for me means identity with a larger political purpose. I don’t know if I’m into the Chicano militancy but I think that there is room for holding on to some sort of legacy of the Movement and by claiming that identity I’m in a way committing to continuing that legacy of social activism.

While children of Chicano Movement activists often claimed “Chicano,” many others who are children of non-activists found that the Chicano label accurately portrayed their ideals of self-representation and anti-colonialism. Tyler Mendoza explains his understanding of the various labels that could apply to him:

“Mexicanos” were always people that just got here. But I always grew up knowing that we have these labels: we’re called Hispanic, Latino, Mexican American, Mexicano. [Of] all these terms, “Chicano” is the only one that people wanted to be called and fought, struggled, and got beat down to be called. And not only to be called that but have the rights that go with that like everybody else. ...“Chicano” is a political term. I like that term more than all the other ones first because there was a struggle, there was a Movement.... “Latinos,” well there is something that needs to encompass all of us globally and that is the word that I like best. “Latino” is something that I would choose to encompass all of us, but “Chicano” would be first thing.

Other respondents disliked the term “Chicano.” Gabriel Ponce dislikes “Chicano” because he associates it with racial or ethnic separatism. As a man of Mexican heritage born in the U.S., Gabriel resists separatism and hopes to find a way to assimilate more smoothly:

I don't like "Chicano," I don't like that word. Because I feel like...you're really separating yourself when you're Chicano.... I was born in the United States, so for me I'm Mexican born in the United States...just a Mexican guy. I'm not a Chicano. I went to a couple of the United Farm Worker marches when I was a baby, but I'm not a Chicano. My parents took us. So, yeah, I don't really like it. It's real separatist.

Indeed, the racial politics of the Chicano Movement were premised on rejecting the previous generation's assimilationist orientation. The Chicano Movement disclaimed Whiteness and sought to define Chicanos as members of a "brown race," converting "non-white status into a badge of pride" (Haney-Lopez 2003: 2).

Many third generation Mexican Americans' racial self-titles change depending on social context. Carmina Dos Santos reflects:

[At college] in Boston I met a lot of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans...so I sort of claimed the title "Latina" to be more inclusive.... I mean, I think I always switch between "Chicana" and "Latina" and it depends on context. "Chicana" for me means identity with a larger political purpose. "Mexican American" is appropriate when I don't have the energy to explain and I assume that people wouldn't understand. I have a hard time with "Hispanic" [because it is a government label and] it doesn't fit who I think I am.

For Carmina, her racial self-title depends on social context. Her response is typical of many third generation Mexican Americans in that "Chicano/a" is associated with politics, "Latino/a" is seen as embracing other Latin and Central American people, and "Mexican American" is an easy self-title because people in California are familiar with the term.

Reyna Madrigal comments similarly:

I say I'm "Chicana." That is what I identify myself with because I was born here [U.S.] and from the classes that I have taken I understand that is the correct terminology for myself. Actually, I say I am "Mexican." But if I'm at the University [where I work in a Chicano Studies Center], I say I'm "Chicana." I think it depends who I am...with because sometimes you get some people that don't understand "Chicana" and you have to explain to them and they think it's derogatory. And there are people like my mom's generation who are like, "Why

do you call yourself that? You rebel, you *chola* gang member.” They really, truly don’t understand the term and what it means and so I think I use it mostly at the University because people there are more educated about the term use. ...Even among my husband’s family [who live in Mexico I say] I’m “Mexican” so they understand that I am from a Mexican decent. I don’t call myself “Latina.” If people will say, “oh, you’re Latina,” I’ll just say “okay.” I won’t say “no, I’m not.”

JMV: Why do you not care for Latina?

Reyna: [Latino/a refers to] people from Latin America—probably people from South and Central America and all the Latin American countries and I’m not from there.

Reyna illustrates a couple interesting points. First, she is more apt to call herself “Chicana” in a social environment wherein people have the same definition of the label—one of political resistance rather than low-class or gang member status. Second, she finds “Latina” ill-fitting because she is not from a Latin American country (conceived of as Central and South American). Other respondents disagree with her precise geography-based use of the word “Latino/a” and see it as a term ready-made for political alliances among people from Latin American countries, broadly conceived.

Mary Waters (1990) found that people often give priority to their surname when making racial identification decisions. People also frequently reduce their racial or ethnic background to the largest segment, producing “selective forgetting and simplification” (Waters 1990: 25). However, Waters did not consider the pivotal role of geography in peoples’ identification choices. My data indicates that proximity to the country of heritage and the demographics of one’s surrounding area affect identification. California’s proximity to Mexico and the immigration streams flowing northward make “Mexican” or “Mexican American” an easily understood label.

Dillon Castillo is ½ Mexican, ¼ Puerto Rican, and ¼ Nicaraguan, but refers to himself as “Mexican American” because it is a simple answer and “easier” than explaining where Puerto Rico and Nicaragua are located. While this ethnic title eclipses some of Dillon’s other heritages he is comfortable with it because it is honest and a label that people in California are likely to grasp. Dillon outlined his logic:

I mostly just say I’m “Mexican” because the people I talk to, they wouldn’t understand if I said “Latino” and I’d have to explain Nicaragua and Puerto Rico and Mexican. So usually I just say Mexican American. I don’t like using Hispanic because my mom says it’s a white guy’s name for the Latinos. Usually I just say I’m “Mexican American” so it’s easy for people. I like one word answers. I say, “Mexican American” and they’ll be like, “OK, fine.” If I say “Latino,” then I have to go “Nicaragua”—most people don’t know where that is—then “Puerto Rico,” then “Mexican.”

While Dillon simplifies his racial title, he acknowledges that “Mexican” or “Mexican American” does not entirely capture his background.

Racial categorizations further the myths of race as rooted in biology and of “racial purity.” Racial classification systems force multi-racial individuals to self-classify into rigid systems that, furthermore, allow for rank-ordering of races. Davina Segura resists being defined by “a box”:

You don’t want to be confined by a box. ...Because I am Mexican, Puerto Rican, American...sometimes I have to check the “other” box [or] put them both.... When it says “please circle only one,” I hate that because people aren’t one box.

Third generation Mexican American respondents exercise discretion as they make racial identification choices. To some extent there is some “flexibility” to the racial claims they can make; yet I would argue that these are limited options within a situation of constraint.

“Flexible Ethnicity” and Living in Two Worlds: The Privilege and Predicament of Being “White-xican”

Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) book *Borderlands/La Frontera* theorizes "mestiza consciousness," that is, the consciousness and social location of racially mixed people (especially Native American Indian and European ancestries). Anzaldúa refers to mestiza women as she writes:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode.... Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (Anzaldúa 1987: 79)

According to Anzaldúa, mixed race people "juggle cultures" and have "plural personalities." This nimble and pluralistic identity holds true for my third generation Mexican American respondents.

Third generation Mexican Americans live "between" Mexican and American social worlds. This is due in part to their life experiences, how others perceive and treat them, as well as their physical appearance. Racial liminality is a complicated position: it requires people to do work constructing their identities. For some this leads to crises, while for others it leads to opportunities. These processes are dynamic, based on social context, and also open to being reshaped over the lifespan.

Third generation Mexican Americans display a "flexible ethnicity." "Flexible ethnicity" is the ability to navigate two different social worlds—mainstream U.S. culture and a Mexican-oriented community. Similar to Jonathan Okamura's notion of "situational ethnicity," which holds that context matters in how a person amplifies or downplays their ethnicity (Okamura 1981), I maintain that situational constraints limit one's array of responses. Due to U.S. citizenship, "cultural toolkits" (Swidler 1986), and

skill sets which mark the third generation as undeniably American, this generation is able to play out flexibly their racial background, amplifying or downplaying their heritage. Again, the volitional aspect to “flexible ethnicity” is limited by how others perceive, treat, and racially mark third generation individuals.

Several third generation Mexican Americans commented on being “in between” Mexican and American social worlds. As Reyna Madrigal commented, “I have no identity. I’m in between. I don’t fit here and I don’t fit in either culture. So I’m looking for something.” While some understood being “in between” as an advantage, for others it precipitated an “identity crisis.”

Samantha Diaz exists in a liminal racial space, neither “Mexican Mexican” nor “American”:

I see myself as Mexican, but a little more whitewashed. I’m part of the generation that is a little lost. Some people consider me not Mexican enough but I’m not American enough. So I’m really stuck in the middle. I don’t categorize myself as Mexican Mexican or American. I’m in the middle.

Samantha considers how she can morph into different social contexts because of her flexible ethnicity and her biculturalism:

When I’m around my Mexican friends, I’m Mexican. When I’m around people at work [Anglo dominant law office], I’m less Mexican. Honestly, I slip into it when it’s convenient. When I have to fit whoever I am around my personality changes.

While Samantha can “fit” a number of different social situations the voluntary nature of personality or cultural shifts should not be overstated. Her ethnic scripts are limited due to a number of elements, including phenotype and cultural repertoires.

Renata Contreras, easily perceived as non-Hispanic white because of her blonde hair and pale skin passed on from her fair Caucasian mother, also makes calculated decisions about her racial claims depending on her social context:

If it's like the Junior League or something like that I...probably would put white and ignore the Hispanic part. Because I just feel like the people there would judge me, "oh, a Hispanic, how nice, what diversity" [sticky sweet and sing-song voice]. In high school I played tennis a lot and we'd go to the tennis club in Montecito [high-class neighborhood] I wouldn't highlight the Mexican part. Just because...I should be proud of it, but then again, you know how people judge and...I don't need that kind of judgment. I don't accentuate it if it's not necessary. In those situations, I'd probably just put white. Then white-slash-Mexican American probably for job applications or [if] I feel like people really would have an open mind or encourage diversity, like a job application or a random survey. Just so I'm sure that they get a diverse perspective. I'm not just another Caucasian person.

Because of her light, European-looking physical characteristics, Renata is able to "pass" as non-Hispanic white. There are certainly limits to how much Renata can control how others perceive her. Yet, when considering what racial background to write on forms or aspects of her background to highlight or downplay, Renata weighs the positive and negative consequences of claiming one or both parts of her ½ white and ½ Mexican American background.

Caitlyn Benavidas also discusses what it feels like to live between cultures:

Definitely as a Chicana I don't feel like I'm part of mainstream culture. ...Yeah, I'm born here and my family is from here but I don't identify myself as an American above anything else. A lot of it is I'm Chicana, my family is native to this land. We don't necessarily abide to the same kind of identity...we don't grasp being American as white Americans do or even immigrant groups do. ...I feel educationally and language-wise I very much fit into mainstream culture and I'm very much a part of mainstream culture but...I don't identify myself with white America.

Caitlyn begins by saying that as a Chicana she is not part of mainstream culture. Then she goes on to delineate how she is a part of mainstream culture in terms of education and language and yet she still stands apart. In essence, Caitlyn is “in” mainstream culture yet she is not “of” mainstream culture. It is unclear whether it is due to external racialization or an internal cultural maintenance sentiment that Caitlyn feels that “as a Chicana” she is set apart from mainstream culture. She reflects on her struggle to delineate her identity:

I definitely felt it was a struggle especially in high school. I was...identifying with being Latina outside of school but still had a lot of white friends.... [I was] not really like them because I wasn't white. That was a struggle just...being different and not really fitting into one group completely. It can be hard, you know, you want to be accepted by people everywhere. ...I think that was a huge struggle at that time in my life.... It was a headache. You cry about stuff like, “Who am I and who am I suppose to be and what am I going to do with myself?”

Despite this identity struggle, Caitlyn sees benefits to navigating two social worlds:

I definitely think [my racial background] gave me insight to a lot of different kind of groups of people.... I feel like it's definitely been positive because I kind of understand people and the way they think.... I know where they get their train of thought comes from. I think it's cool to be able to jump from culture to culture.

Humans are social beings who crave cultural belonging. Caitlyn was unsettled by not knowing where she fit and yet she found some positive elements in being in a diverse environment when she was at times seen as white and at other times seen as Latina.

Carmina and Auscencio Dos Santos, both third generation and children of Chicano activist parents, found a flexible ethnicity an advantage as well as a source of identity struggles. Carmina, who has light hair and skin and green eyes, tells me about the privilege of “passing” for non-Hispanic white:

I guess it's an advantage. I have the privilege of blend[ing] in.... I think there are certain privileges to looking not stereotypically Mexican. Things I take for granted like not being followed in a store, not being labeled as somebody who

doesn't have money, you know, all those sort of labels that I think people give to you. So in that sense, I think there are benefits.

The other thing is that...because I am so light I see things and I hear things that other people say just assuming that I'm on their side. I've also had, "you're not that kind of Mexican. You're not like the rest of them." So, yeah, it gives you so many windows to look into.

Carmina does not experience the "shop owner tailgate" discussed in Chapter Four or the presumption that she is lower class because she does not look "stereotypically Mexican." She is accorded white privilege due to her pale features, yet this white "insider" status is a double-edged sword as it lets her in on conversations people have when they assume they are in all white company.

Carmina Dos Santos' older brother, Auscencio, tells a similar story about living in a "third space" where he is both Mexican *and* American. Auscencio reflects on what it means to be Chicano and "in between":

It's really weird: what does it mean to be Chicano? I mean, the basic principles are there: you're born here...you're first or second generation. You were raised with both—my dad would say, "I'm as much hamburger as I am taco." Hamburgers and hot dogs; tacos and burritos. You have both of those. It's being too white for Mexicanos and too Mexicano for the white people. So you're somewhere in between. You have your own dialect, your own foods.

Being "as much hamburger as taco," Auscencio figures himself in the middle of a cultural borderland. He is enacting a "cultural maintenance" lifestyle in that Mexican culture is instrumental and meaningful to him in his everyday life. Nonetheless, as all third generation Mexican Americans I interviewed, he is also very much American by both birthright and "cultural toolkit." Auscencio, who goes by Ceño among friends and family, reviews his bicultural, borderland status:

I think it's clear that I'm probably more Americanized than I think I would like to admit. I've got my Internet, got my.... Just my whole lifestyle is pretty

American. But I do feel, at times...when I read history books or I see the horrible things that this country has done, I'm like, "oh, man, I'm so glad I'm not 100% American." I don't feel I fit in anywhere. I'm like right in between—and it's okay. Especially here in California. We have our own type of world here. I think my attitude would be very different in somewhere like Nebraska. Or Montana. Your environment dictates who you are, and almost how you act. That's definitely how it is with me. So I guess it almost depends where I am too, because when I was living in El Paso, Texas...I felt much more Mexicano there than I did American in El Paso. Because I was "Ceño" and my friends were Julio and Oscar. I would go to the store and the woman would swipe my card and say, "Thank you, Mr. Dos Santos" [correct Spanish pronunciation]. I'd be like, "yeah!" ...There is something to be said for being completely accepted and understood. I have a really big spot in my heart for El Paso.

This rich passage touches on a number of important themes. First, Auscencio envisions his attachment to Mexico as a way to distance himself from the imperialist history of the United States. Second, he notes the importance of California as his social context: he is amongst many others who share his in-between status. Third, he describes the "situational ethnicity" (Okamura 1981) he feels when he was residing in a border town in Texas with a large Mexican population and his Mexican identity was endorsed and even reinforced.

Jillian and Andrew Rosenberg, met in Chapter Two on "Thinned Attachment," also experienced "flexible ethnicity" and identity struggles due to their biculturalism. Recall that Jillian and Andrew's parents are a Mexican American mother and a Jewish father. They both have light-skin and brown hair and are perceived in various ways by outsiders who do not necessarily guess they are of Mexican descent.

Jillian has experienced two extremes of her Mexican identity. It was "dirty" and something to actively estrange herself from when she was younger: "I had really awful stereotypes of what Mexican people were like too, like all Mexican people are gardeners and maids.... It was always...the half of me that I had to hide. I was always so

embarrassed of that; I was soiled in some way because I had Mexican blood in me.” Now, in college on the East Coast her peers who are enthusiastically looking for some “uniqueness” to mark them as “not just white” exoticize her. Jillian considers the “identity crisis” that her “flexible ethnicity” produced upon moving to Yale and changing social contexts:

It’s actually really funny now because going to Yale, it’s a total reversal. I’m having a completely new identity crisis. Because suddenly it’s cool to be Mexican, it’s exotic, and “I’m of a different race, I’m not just a white kid” [her voice gets breathless and sexualized]. It’s a really diverse campus and people definitely put a lot of emphasis on diversity. It’s just so funny. Now all the white kids are like, “oh my god, I wish I were half of something like you are, at least, to make me exotic.” I’m like, I never thought of being Mexican as exotic. I always thought it was gross and dirty and lame and not exotic. “Oh, your eyes are so Mexican, they are so exotic and pretty.” I’m just like, “what is this? What is happening there?” It’s just really interesting seeing that. All of growing up I was trying hard to be white and I was too Mexican and it was bad and now it’s like the other Mexican kids there think I’m not Mexican enough because I’m half white.

Social context significantly bears on one’s racialized experience. Jillian grew up in Santa Barbara, California where she was ashamed of her Mexican heritage because she felt it carried negative, lower class connotations. She then moved to Yale where she was racially exoticized; this sexualization became only another way to “other” her and consider her different. While ostensibly a compliment, the act of creating social distance is merely another way to create social divisions and build dichotomous boundaries of you-me, self-other, normal-abnormal, normal-other.

Andrew Rosenberg, Jillian’s younger brother, also felt pulled between his two racial backgrounds: “I guess just my overall experience with growing up with two completely different backgrounds...it’s kind of weird.... I guess I have always felt pulled between the two. So that was always kind of hard.” Like his sister, Andrew’s high school had racially segregated classes. In addition to their bicultural background, one

reason that Jillian and Andrew navigate white settings seamlessly is because they were placed in advanced placement classes with white students. Andrew experienced segregated classes:

That's just what I see in the school system: "Oh, he's Mexican—put him in that class." It's really kind of how it is. It's really bad. I don't think it's that intentional. But if you're Mexican and you walk into a class of all white people, it's like—oh, this is the GATE class. I don't belong here. When really a lot of those Mexicans who are in the normal classes should be in the GATE classes. And some of the people who are in GATE classes shouldn't be at all.... But I think the counselors feel too afraid to put a white kid in a normal class, because the parents would probably get mad or the kid would be like—what am I doing in this class? So I think a lot of people just automatically get put in these classes. They are actually having some problems with the high school. People are saying all the Mexicans are just getting put in the lower classes. The high school is pretty bad, in fact.

As half-white and half-Mexican, Andrew struggled in school with his identity and how he fit into a racially stratified white-and-brown environment:

I guess just my experience in school has been...kind of...hard.... I have been put mostly in GATE classes.... It was always "the white kids" and then "the Mexicans." And I was like—what am I supposed to do? You know? So it's...awkward. Because my skin is white. Especially in high school, you know? I hear so many people being like, "Oh, yeah, look at the beaner car." Or, "Oh, the stupid beaners." And I'm like—hey! I just don't really know what to do a lot. This year it has gotten kind of worse, actually. Because I'm kind of starting to see and hear stuff that I didn't think people really would say. There are actually a lot of people who say the "N" word a lot. And I'm just like...you can't really say that.... So for me, just growing up with two different backgrounds just has been awkward.

While Andrew is already perceived and treated as non-Hispanic white due to his skin tone, last name, and class status, he resists totally "passing" when his Mexican heritage is threatened. In contrast to "symbolic ethnicity," where the stakes to claiming an ethnicity are minimal, Andrew enacts a sort of "sentimental ethnicity" as he defends his marginalized background when it is defamed. In fact, he proactively claims his Mexican

background as a way to ward off demeaning comments that may be cast against his racial group:

I have always tried to let people know that I was Mexican. I don't really know why I've always done that. I guess maybe it was partly I was afraid they would start making fun of Mexicans and I didn't want to be in that situation. So a lot of times I joke around and be like, "Oh, whatever just because I'm Mexican?" And make jokes like that.... It's just...scary because you don't really know where you fit in.

Andrew problematizes "passing" and makes racializing conversations difficult for others.

Andrew regrets not having many Mexican friends:

I have always regretted that I haven't had as many Mexican friends. I have hung out mostly with white people. And I think it's partly because of the classes that I got put into. It's just kind of ... disappointing. I guess it's like I don't feel like completely Mexican, you know? I feel just kind of stuck in the middle....

Playing soccer, a sport that draws a lot of participation from Mexicans, was a way for him to meet more Mexican students and "stay in touch with his Mexican side."

Andrew feels doubly oppressed because his white ethnic descent is Jewish, a historically discriminated against minority. Instead of eclipse any part of his racial background, Andrew learns about and embraces his Jewish side as well:

I decided to start going to Temple in the middle of seventh grade. I just all-of-a-sudden kind of felt like I wanted to go. Then my little sister started going. And my dad got back into it. It was kind of cool to get involved with that. But at the same time, I still feel kind of like a half-Jew, I guess. Just because I started late. And I didn't have my bar mitzvah. And I don't really know that much.

Coming to terms with his bicultural and biracial background, Andrew learns that to be "half Mexican" or "half Jewish" is acceptable: "I'm just kind of like accepting myself for who I am. I don't need to be Mexican or Jewish. It's just being myself. I do feel pulled at times. But I just try and...just be myself, I guess. As cliché as it sounds." What makes this resolution hard to come reach is the low esteem that being "mixed" has had

historically. As a society, there is little recognition that there are myriad ways to “be” any particular (or mixed) racial, cultural, or religious identity. Rigid categorical labels do little to acknowledge the variety of identities, attitudes, and behaviors that are captured within any one group.

Despite the emotional challenges to belonging to two cultures, Andrew does delight in it somewhat:

It’s kind of fun, though. Because you get a little bit of both. So even though it’s been hard it...it’s cool. We celebrate Christmas and Chanukah. And it’s like it’s just kind of cool seeing two completely different cultures, but seeing them get along. Just in how my family gets along and interacts.... It’s just interesting...seeing those two different sides working together. It’s kind of cool.

Andrew’s position as being in “two worlds at the same time” allows for some benefits such as “helping him to understand other people.”¹⁰³

Racialization: Forced and Enforced Racial Identity

“All ethnicities are not equal, all are not symbolic, costless, and voluntary” (Waters 1990: 160). Indeed, the “symbolic ethnicity” or “ethnic option” that white ethnics enjoy—that is, they may practice elements of their ethnicity with no detrimental effects—is evidence of White privilege. The experience of racial minorities in the U.S. is quite different. Various social and political components prohibit racial minorities’ ability to experience their ethnic background as individual and voluntary. It is this critical difference between instrumental ethnicity and symbolic ethnicity to which we now turn.

¹⁰³ See Patricia Hill Collins’ “Learning from the Outsider Within” which discusses how being a minority within Anglo-dominant institutions allows for a particularly incisive vision into systems of power Collins, Patricia Hill. 1986. “Learning from the Outsider Within.” *Social Problems* 33:14-32..

On-going immigration from Mexico creates a particular social context for later-generation Mexican Americans in California to negotiate. At times Mexican Americans sympathize and bond with Mexican immigrants and at other times they distinguish and separate themselves from the newcomers (Gutiérrez 1995; Ochoa 2004). A reason for the sense of connectedness is a similarity of place of origin and immigration and acculturation experiences. A motivation for maintaining social distance from the new arrivals is the threat that stereotypes against immigrants will adversely affect Mexican Americans born in the U.S. Tomás Macías (2006: 8) writes: “ongoing immigration tends to create a heightened, if distorted, awareness of ethnicity among the population in general, such that prejudice and stereotypes against groups experiencing ongoing immigration are maintained over time.” This collective awareness of Mexican immigration, coupled with the inability of mainstream society to notice differences between immigrants and natives, complicates the situation of Mexican Americans. In many respects, as Mexican immigrants are racialized, so too are Mexican Americans.

Discrimination is a primary way racialization—the enforcement of a non-white racial identity that is devalued and oppressed—is enacted. As detailed in Chapters Four and Five, racial discrimination pervades public spaces and school systems. In those chapters, I argued that phenotype, surname, and “cultural toolkit” were markers of difference that exposed people to discrimination and that forms of discrimination varied across time. Perhaps it is easiest to see the process of racialization at work in situations when a Mexican American initially “passes” as non-Hispanic white and is later “outed” as Mexican American. The change in how people are defined racially often leads to a corresponding change in treatment—loss of jobs, withholding of support or friendships,

withdrawing of resources, etc. For example, recall in Chapter Five the experience of Veronica Guzman whose blonde, light-skinned sister was treated preferentially by the high school Vice Principal until she was “discovered” to be Mexican American.

Caitlyn Benavidas similarly experienced racialization when she was “found out” to be Mexican American. While she feels she looks Mexican, Caitlyn often “passes” as non-Hispanic white or Persian. She becomes vulnerable to racialization at the moment when others reinterpret their misreading of her racial identity:

I’ve had some...really uncomfortable situations with people thinking that I was not Mexican. ...I was hired as a waitress by a Jordanian family and they hired me thinking I was Greek or Persian. I started speaking Spanish to the busboys once and they were like, “Why the hell are you speaking Spanish? You can’t be Mexican.” And basically went off on me about how they probably wouldn’t have hired me if they had known I was [Mexican] and that my mom was too beautiful to be Mexican.... As flattering as it [is] to be able to float to different groups and for people to think that you might be something else, I start getting offended by it because that’s actually who I am.

The process of racialization occurs here as Caitlyn’s Jordanian boss made assumptions about her character, competence, and desirability in the workplace based on race. While some people might want to pass to accrue the benefits associated with whiteness, Caitlyn wishes she were darker to avoid treatment based on a racial misperception:

Sometimes I wished I looked maybe a bit more stereotypically Mexican because I don’t like that people might treat me differently because they think I’m not[.] I think a lot of people would rather be fairer skinned because of racism but I wished I was a little bit browner because people think I’m white.

Granted, Caitlyn says this having lived with a “flexible ethnicity” but, even so, she has clearly been subjected to racialization. Moreover, Caitlyn dislikes being racially misunderstood because she is proud of her heritage and because she associates darker-skinned people with beauty. Yet, wanting to be darker is a strategic move to avoid an

uncomfortable situation when people say racist remarks in her presence, taking for granted that she is “one of them.”

Jillian Rosenberg, another light-skinned woman, also experiences a “magnified moment” of racialization as she reveals her Mexican heritage. In a situation with significant long-term ramifications, a college career counselor told Jillian Rosenberg that the program she was interested in was for minorities only. When she told him that indeed she is Mexican American, he retorted that she would have to “prove” that she is a “real Mexican” on the application. Jillian recounts the conversation:

Another experience I had in college was that I went to speak with a pre-med advisor about my plans and mapping out my courses. He’s known for being a really big jerk. People hate him because he tells it like it is and flat up tells you, “you’re not going to get into med school,” stuff like that. I asked the counselor about a minority program I heard about. “Oh, that’s just for minorities.”

I said, “Oh, actually I am Mexican.”

“Oh, well, if you want to take advantage of that, on applications you are really going to have to prove that, I don’t want to sound un-PC [politically correct] here or anything, but you are really going to have to prove that you are a real Mexican.”

I was like, “excuse me?”

“Well, I mean, are you part of any cultural organizations here?”

“No, don’t really agree with a lot of their purposes so I chose not to join them.”

“Well, have you gone to cultural events or organized Latino heritage month?”

“No, like I said, I don’t really agree w/ their purposes.”

“Well, do you speak Spanish fluently?”

“Actually, it was my first language, but I lost it. I can understand it pretty well, but I don’t really speak very well.”

“Well, are you taking any Spanish classes at least.”

“No, it doesn’t fit into my schedule.”

“Well, you are really going to have to do something here to prove that you are a real Mexican.”

“I’m sorry, but organizing a cultural dinner does not prove that I am a real Mexican.”

That’s just who I am. It’s just been difficult. Because it is who I am and I’m not going to be able to change that no matter what. I can’t make myself more or less Mexican, but at the same time, there is this constant push and pull.... I feel like I have to prove it to people. How do I do that? Do I really need to do that? ...Even though I’ve come to terms with it within myself, now it’s like I have to bring everyone else to terms with it.

The college counselor’s effort to racialize Jillian is notable: he challenges her authenticity while simultaneously commanding her to fit into preconceived and static notion of Mexican American identity.

Racialization also involves assuming cultural knowledge based on racial assumptions. Respondents were often expected to have superior knowledge of Spanish due to their Mexican heritage. In their Spanish classes, both Amalia Ruiz and Gabriel Ponce were presumed to be conversant in the language:

Amalia: I’m not [fluent in Spanish]. I have learned it at times[.] I remember in high school...I got really pissed off because a teacher asked me a question in Spanish. I think it was second-year Spanish. I just barely passed first-year Spanish. And I didn’t know the answer. And in front of the whole class he said, “you know, just because you speak Spanish at home doesn’t mean that you don’t have to study for this class.” What?! I felt so angry and humiliated. First of all, I didn’t know Spanish so I don’t speak it at home! He assumed that I did. And he scolded me in front of the whole class. I legitimately didn’t know the answer. And he thought...I was just...lazy. He thought I was just going to be a lazy Mexican, basically.

Gabe: My Spanish teachers in high school were really hard on me because they knew my name was Spanish. I struggled a lot with that ‘cuz I was always the first guy called on.

Here teachers racialize students as they expect both negative stereotypes and linguistic abilities to be inherent within racial group members.

“Complimentary othering” is yet another form of racialization or racial alienation. “Complimentary othering” occurs when people consider certain Mexican Americans as “exceptions to the rule,” the “rules” in question being racist assumptions of underachievement, intelligence, success, beauty, and so on. In this way, the speaker simultaneously downgrades a group of people based on negative stereotypes while extolling the virtues of a single individual. This backhanded compliment does not consider the *variance* within any group of people. More to the point, the implicit suggestion of “complimentary othering” is that the person being complimented does not serve as positive example of the capabilities of the group but rather needs to be distinguished from the group in order to explain his or her “exceptionalism.” “Othering” occurs here despite the individual level compliment in that the complimented individual is ultimately demeaned on the group level.

Jillian Rosenberg, a Yale undergraduate, provides an example of how “complimentary othering” works:

I do think that people, when they find out that I’m Mexican, [think] that I’m an exception to the rule. I want to try really hard to be a good example and show people that Mexicans aren’t just gardeners. I definitely feel like I get written off as, “oh well, she’s not like most Mexicans.” ... I feel like I get written off as an exception. Even if I do do something really great, it’s like “oh, OK, well, she’s not like rest. Most Mexicans wouldn’t be able to do something like that.”

If perceived as a racial minority, one is in jeopardy of being saddled with negative stereotypes. Jillian, like many other college-going or college-educated third generation Mexican Americans, is seen as an “exception to the rule” when she performs well. This perception is based on “ethnic lumping” (Ochoa 2004) wherein non-members of the ethnic group fail to differentiate between newcomer Mexican immigrants—who are at a socioeconomic disadvantage if they are economic migrants—and Mexican Americans who were born and raised here. In the minds of many, “Mexican-origin” equates to “Mexican immigrant.” This conflation obscures the acculturation, upward mobility, and structural integration of later-generation Mexican Americans.

Gilda Ochoa (2004) argues that “racial/ethnic lumping” often occurs in the wake of political movements (for example, California ballot initiatives such as Propositions 187, 209, 227, and 54) when the effects of a racialized political environment are expanded from one racial/ethnic group to another (such as from Mexican immigrants to Mexican Americans, regardless of generation in the U.S., or Latinos more generally) (Ochoa 2004: 143). Perhaps as a response to “racial/ethnic lumping,” “linked fate” suggests that, for racial minority group members, “group interests [serve] as a useful proxy for self-interest” (Dawson 1994: 77). Especially with regard to political action and voting, “linked fate” explicitly links perceptions of self-interest to perceptions of racial group interests.

Battle for Authenticity: Identity Struggles in Contested Terrain

Intra-group tension occurs as Mexican Americans (or Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants) vie for “authentic” status, a process one respondent referred to as the “super-Chicano” phenomenon. As Julie Bettie (2003: 48) found in her work on Mexican

American and White youth, “class and racial/ethnic signifiers are melded together in such a way that ‘authentic’ black, and sometimes brown, identity is imagined as lower-class, urban, and often violent—and male as well.” Central elements of Mexican-origin in-group struggles over authenticity include Spanish language fluency, cultural competency, skin color, class status, clothing, and behavior.

→ *Cultural Toolkit: Spanish Language Fluency*

Spanish language competency is a litmus test of one’s degree of association with Mexico (Ochoa 2004). Language is a marker of national boundaries, a type of “cognitive insulation” that nations build in order to cement their identity and demarcate their borders (Cerulo 1995). Fluency in legitimate, national language is a mark of social distinction, a form of capital (Bourdieu 1991: 55). Individuals fluent in Spanish—and not necessarily proficient in English—feel superiority over those who speak English only. For Mexican Americans who do speak fluent Spanish, linguistic proficiency can be an asset in authenticity contests. Renata Contreras, a light skinned third generation woman with blonde hair, explains how her Spanish ability allows her to openly contradict other Mexicans’ assumption that she is a “*gringa*,” or white girl. Renata describes this intra-ethnic prejudice and her reaction:

From Mexican girls at school: “*Oh, mira, gringa!*” [“Oh, look, white girl!”] That gets me so mad. I would think, “I can speak better Spanish than you!” Maybe [not better than] someone straight from Mexico but a Mexican American. “Oh, *gringa*.” Just not very nice attitudes.... They don’t even know. It would make me laugh and then it would make me mad, “where do you get off?! I probably have more tie to the culture than you do. Just because I look a certain way or hang out with a certain group of people, you can’t just assume.”

As with all respondents who felt they had been unfairly judged by their appearance and were expected to fit a corresponding ethnic profile, Renata invokes the old axiom of “not judging a book by its cover.” While Renata in a sense won this battle over authenticity, many other people lose this contest and are in the precarious position of justifying to themselves, if not others, that there is not one single way to be Mexican American

This struggle was particularly difficult for third generation Mexican Americans who lacked Spanish language fluency. Even while arguing that limited Spanish skills did not diminish their claims to heritage, these Mexican Americans still felt embarrassed and wounded by attacks from more recent immigrants who asserted that they were not Mexican because they could not speak the language. Samantha Diaz ruminates on Spanish as a barometer for Mexican “authenticity”:

After high school, when I was twenty-one, I went in to the high school and was a color guard instructor. Most of them were Mexican and fluently speaking Spanish. I thought I could connect with these girls and have something in common. And then, I’ll never forget because two girls dropped out and I heard the reason they dropped out was because I wasn’t Mexican enough. Uh-huh. I wasn’t Mexican enough. I didn’t speak Spanish and I was basically a different culture than them. It sticks into my mind in this day. *How can I not be Mexican enough?* But, it’s probably my life story. I don’t feel Mexican enough. But I’m not white. I’m just in the middle.

Samantha, like many others, exists in between two worlds and is not fully accepted in either: she is “not Mexican enough” but she is also “not white.” While each person navigates their social context differently, pervasive battles over authenticity that Mexican-descent people must negotiate—such as mother-language retention—remains a reality.

→ *Personal Traits: Phenotype*

While my dark-skinned respondents vociferously complained of the obstacles that their appearance presented, some of my light-skinned respondents noted that they had to fight for “authenticity” and acceptance. While being immediately recognized as Mexican has its hardships, so does being dismissed as *not* being Mexican. Dillon Castillo, a light-skinned third generation seventeen year old, tells me that he “feels stronger than he looks.” He wishes he had a darker complexion so that his heritage would be questioned less often. Dillon’s strategy in authenticity fights is to display cultural symbols and accessories that signal what his pale skin does not. Dillon answers my question on how he describes himself racially or ethnically:

I feel stronger than I look. I’m not very dark. So, most people wouldn’t assume that I’m Latino. So it’s difficult—when I say I am people, ‘oh yeah?’ they look at me funny. But I have a lot of stuff. My car is kinda low-rider, I had a *zarape* [Mexican blanket] over my seat, I have *la Virgen de Guadalupe* on my window. I used to have a little Mexican flag in my room. I’m proud of it. But I don’t really look like it, I guess. But I’m very proud.

Since skin color is often (mis)understood to equate with cultural allegiance, Dillon elects to do “cultural work” by displaying cultural symbols that he hopes will make up for his light skin color. If he lacks dark skin, he can at least have “*la Virgen*” in his window. On both sides of the skin color spectrum, physical looks have zero correlation with one’s sense of culture, identity, or allegiance to Mexico or the United States.

Carmina Dos Santos, a light skinned woman with light brown hair and green eyes, illustrates how her unintended passing for European-descent white can work against her. People discount her attachment to her heritage because they cannot visually perceive her Mexican background. In her words, “there are times when people just assume that I’m a sell out because of the color of my skin. ...So in that sense I think it’s a total disadvantage because I often have to prove myself to the community that I belong to.” In

contradistinction to Adele and Ruben Mendoza in Chapter Four who were denied housing based on their Spanish surname, Carmina utilizes her Spanish surname in order to authenticate her race:

My freshman year in college...I went to a [Latino/a club] meeting in campus and was completely ignored. They just didn't say hello to me. ...They were saying hello to everybody else and...I pretty much sort of snuck away. I was like forget this, they're not paying attention to me. But the next quarter my dad was invited to come give a poetry reading and I sat in the front row and my dad introduced me and they said, "Well, how come you don't come to our meetings?" And I just looked at them and I said, "I did." I think [if] they don't know my name or they're not familiar with my parents I think I'm just ignored.... I think part of me has learned to not care. When it's to my advantage then I tend to bring my parents' names up. Not so much to use as a crutch but definitely if it works to my advantage.

Carmina's "Dos Santos" surname is often recognized as belonging to a family of Chicano activists and artists, which gains her status and authenticity cachet. Carmina had mixed feelings about pulling out the last name card, but it is one way she can combat being mis-recognized as non-Latina.

As a consequence of being a light-skinned, green-eyed Mexican American Carmina would often respond to what she called "micro-aggressions" by retorting about the physical diversity of Mexican Americans. She described a "micro-aggression" as insults that people either consciously or unconsciously say, often with regard to race or gender, that have a cumulative effect. She provides an example of a brief conversation she had with an anonymous man in an elevator:

"You must be Italian."

"No." I went through the whole thing and then I said "Mexican."

He said, "You don't look Mexican."

And I said, "Really, what do we look like?"

She viewed this exchange as a micro-aggression for two reasons: first, she was incorrectly perceived, and second, her interlocutor had a narrow assumption of what Mexicans look like that rendered her invisible. Carmina makes herself visible by underscoring the physical diversity of Mexicans, broadening the physical definition of Mexican so that it can encompass her. In sum, Carmina concludes, “I work hard to hang on to the Mexican part because I think it would be so easy for me to pass.”

Renata Contreras, who is light-skinned and blonde haired, remarked on the boundary-marking nature of membership in a Latina college student group: “I felt brushed aside because I wasn’t considered Latina at all by them, just because of looks.... They don’t know me or care to know much more about me.” Renata explicitly cites physical appearance as a reason for why people “naturally stick” with that heritage. The gravitational pull is toward the culture that one “looks like” most and is therefore most likely identified with by outsiders. Renata remarks:

People in society judge you based on what you look like, if you have dark skin or light hair or the way you talk, your accent, or the way you pronounce certain words. So that’s the way you identify with a certain group more easily. Maybe if my [Mexican] dad was around more I’d feel more ties to the Mexican culture, but since my [Anglo] mom was mostly there, I feel more assimilated into her side.

Here Renata credits both phenotype and parental influence as pivotal in how she racially and culturally identifies. Renata is structurally integrated into U.S. mainstream: she is college-educated, earns a middle-class living, and maneuvers white culture seamlessly. Renata finds that she could easily “ignore the Contreras” side of herself as “pass” as non-Hispanic white. Yet, she acknowledges, “I don’t want to be the same as everybody else, it’s nice to have a little difference and spice.”

→ *Generation in the U.S.*

Generation in the U.S. is often a yardstick by which racial authenticity gets measured. As Renata noted above, cultural struggles between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans are common. Clearly there are limits to the “flexibility” of ethnicity. Mexican immigrants often claim a superior status because they are more recent arrivals and they are more in tune with Mexican culture than Mexican Americans—who are sometimes derogatively referred to as “whitewashed” or “*pochos*.”

Although half-Mexican and half-Jewish Jillian Rosenberg considers herself both Mexican and American, not everyone willingly grants her entrance into Mexican circles. These racial gatekeepers, often first generation Mexican immigrant youth, use generation as a measure of a person’s “authenticity”:

The other Mexican kids [at Yale] think I’m not Mexican enough because I’m half-white. I’ve had terrible, terrible interactions with other Mexican students where they find that I’m half white and they just turn around and walk away. It was unbelievable.

One does not need to be half-White to be treated as a Mexican outcast or imposter. Marisol Fuentes, both of whose parents are second generation Mexican Americans, is subject to similar scrutiny by Mexican immigrant youth. Marisol, born and reared in San Diego, attended largely Latino schools and seldom experienced racial discrimination from Whites. Yet Mexican nationals who crossed the border from Tijuana judged her as insufficiently Mexican and put her in a defensive position. Reflecting on her experience of racial strife in school, Marisol stressed the importance of recognizing the variegation within the Latino community. She describes the difference between the

Mexican nationals who come from Tijuana, Mexico and third generation Mexican Americans, such as herself:

In community college we had a lot of people come from across the border to come to school. It wasn't until then that I realized the difference between Mexicans on the U.S. side of the border and the Mexicans on the other side of the border. It was just very different. And it was then when people started telling me, "You're not really Mexican. You don't speak Spanish as well as we do and you don't dress the way we do and you don't talk the way we do and you don't go to the same places and you've never been to Tijuana. ...We live there, we know what Mexico is like."

This highly personal critique has affected Marisol's identification choices:

It was just very recently that I decided that I'm Mexican American. ...In high school...I would say, "I'm Mexican." It wasn't until community college that I was confronted with those things like, "you're not Mexican." So I didn't know what to call myself. I'm like, "I'm Mexican," and they're like, "no, no you're not."

The social context of San Diego, a border city that is a hub for both immigration and transmigration, is key to Marisol's identification quandaries. San Diego is a social context wherein Mexican immigrants and third generation Mexican Americans exist side by side. This close proximity can yield intra-ethnic conflicts regarding both racial "authenticity" and racial self-titles.

Generational differences (i.e., Mexican nationals as compared to third generation Mexican Americans) actually subsume and stand in for a number of other differences, such as language and socioeconomic status. As discussed above, language is a significant social divider. Marisol considered the differences that "generation" embraces:

I think just language. Language is a big thing. Not knowing perfect Spanish the way they [Mexican nationals] do was always a big put back on me.... I was more ashamed of speaking Spanish around them because I didn't know it as well as they did.... I felt kind of ashamed that I didn't know Spanish—like I was suppose to know it because I was Mexican and in order to be truly Mexican you had to know Spanish.

Not just language, but socioeconomic status, is confounded with generation:

I don't know where they [Mexican nationals] get their money. ...I don't think their families have money.... Other people that I've met do come from the lower [class] of Tijuana, Mexico and that is why they are coming to school in the United States because they know the education is better.

Marisol sees a parallel between generation in the U.S., Spanish language ability, and class status. While her third generation status has afforded her advantages such as education, English fluency, and middle class status, it also comes with detractors such as limited Spanish ability that weaken her claim to so-called "authentic" Mexican identity.

A similarity in generational status can minimize cultural, linguistic, and class arguments. Some respondents felt that fewer authenticity battles occur when they are among other third generation Mexican Americans. Auscencio Dos Santos commented about the cultural comfort he feels when he is in the company of other Mexican Americans: "...There is something to be said for being completely accepted and understood." Similarly, Ricardo Torres feels most comfortable around other third generation Mexican Americans. Ricardo explicitly highlights generation in the U.S. as a key indicator of what facilitates a cultural comfort zone:

Ever since I was little I've been mostly around first generation Mexicans. I was raised with those kids.... Those were the guys that I ran with...but there was always a distance, I can't lie. But then again I had a lot of third generation friends and the third generation Mexicans were always my best friends. Those were the guys I closely identified with; I went to their houses and their parents were like mine. I really value those friends, when I come to look at it.

JMV: In what ways were your friends' parents like your parents? What made that special?

Ricardo: Because they were Mexican and they felt comfortable speaking English and at the same time we'd be eating frijoles [beans], tortillas, all that stuff. There's just kind of a camaraderie, I guess, between more assimilated Chicanos, just because there is not as many. It's like a minority within a minority.

Ricardo feels “camaraderie” with other third generation “more assimilated Chicanos” who speak English and eat beans and tortillas. In short, those third generation Mexican Americans occupy a similar space on an assimilation and nationality spectrum as he. While there are often “battles of authenticity” that occur amongst different groups of Mexican Americans—these contests are waged around issues like Spanish fluency or generation in the U.S.—there is a cultural comfort zone shared by similarly situated Mexican Americans. Little cultural translation is necessary within third generation Mexican American social networks.

Notions of racial “authenticity,” struggled over by Mexicans and Mexican-origin people such as language fluency, phenotype, and generation, *essentialize* what it means to be Mexican American. Third generation Mexican Americans overwhelmingly argue that there is a wide variety of ways to “be” Mexican American or “enact” that hybrid identity. Mexican nationals often confront Mexican Americans about the validity of their racial identity, suggesting that there are discrete ways to measure and judge this very subjective concept. In response, third generation Mexican Americans puzzle over how to “prove” their Mexican culture or, conversely, they eschew the challenge to prove themselves and underscore the diversity of Mexican Americans.

Despite the fact that a Mexican American identity can be enacted in many ways, select characteristics are reified as essential components of a racial identity. While these measures of authenticity operate even (maybe especially) within the groups or individuals themselves, it must be underscored that no particular set of traits can be enshrined as the racial standard. First, race is a social construction in the first place, making boundaries both arbitrary and somewhat permeable. Second, the high degree of racial intermarriage

in the U.S. (more so for Latinos and Asians with Whites than for Blacks with Whites) blurs these racial boundaries. This racial blurring continues with the biracial or multiracial children of intermarriages. Third, culture itself is dynamic rather than static; ethnic culture can embrace an array of meanings and practices. The variety of ways to live out any given racial identity belies the essentialist notion that some physical, behavioral, or attitudinal elements are necessary to be a true or authentic member of a racial group.

Dynamism of Culture: Changing Ideas of Masculinity

Culture is neither monolithic nor static. Currently, third generation Mexican Americans are debating machismo (patriarchy) and gender norms. While anti-machismo sentiments and actions are widely embraced, some remnants of gender traditionalism persist. A post-1970s feminist movement re-reading of gender roles is producing a progressive but incomplete gender revolution. The first step in recognizing social change is to acknowledge the cultural diversity within any social group. The second step is to acknowledge the effect that historical era and social movements have on cultural content. Gender roles are one cultural element that is currently adapting to a post-feminist movement U.S. Mexican immigration to the U.S. facilitates change in traditional Mexican gender norms due to the U.S.'s more egalitarian gender system (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Both men and women in the third generation spoke about their desire and attempt to change patriarchy, machismo, and rigid gender roles.

A negative consequence of intra-group "battles for authenticity" is that they reify and freeze particular versions and visions of racial identity. Race, class, and cultural

toolkit become fused, producing a static notion of the meaning and content of Mexican American identity. Mexican nationals, Mexican Americans, and European-descent Americans engage in this reductionist thinking. For instance, Samantha Diaz essentializes what it means to be Mexican American as she describes herself as “whitewashed” as opposed to the boiled-down alternative of “hard core.” Samantha recalls junior high school:

I honestly thought I was white, up until then. They’re Mexican, they’re the same color as me, but I didn’t see myself as brown. I saw myself as white. I affiliated being truly Mexican—they spoke Spanish, they wore different clothes, they had different hairstyles...they cussed and brought knives to school.... I had nothing in common with them. They were more hard-core kids. They had attitude.

European-descent Americans engage in this same reductionist thinking. Lance Morelos speaks to the essentialized notion of Mexican-origin as necessarily lower-class and/or immigrant:

I even had one teacher say to me, “I don’t really consider you a Mexican. You don’t seem like them.” ...The way they knew Mexicans were hair back in nets, the little pants, the white tee-shirts, the *cholos*. They didn’t see me as Mexican because I didn’t look like a *cholo*.

While the tendency to essentialize Mexican identity is widespread, there are ways in which Mexican culture is changing.

Twenty-eight year old Araceli Trevino reflects on raising her two young boys: “I definitely want to push the family aspect and that family is first. ...You can be making all the money in the world but if I’m not seeing my kids, it’s pointless.” Attached to this “family first” value is also a desire to change the traditional family model by raising boys who have a sensitive side and are not macho. Araceli explains her anti-macho parenting style:

It's tough as a single mom trying to raise your kids strong but at the same time I don't want them to have the whole macho mentality. And so, it's hard because you get so many people around saying that "You're so soft on them. They need to be strong...." But I don't think there is anything wrong with having a boy that is really sensitive. I get frowned upon from so many Mexican guys that I hang out with. "He's going to be a sissy or he's going to be gay." And I'm like, "just because he's sensitive or just because he doesn't want to tackle you doesn't necessarily mean gay." I want them to know that it's okay to own up to their feelings. It's okay to cry and it's okay to be sad. It's okay to express your feelings.... And a lot of the guys that I hang out with can't stand it. ...It's very funny how ignorant people still are...they think if they hug a doll they're going to turn out to be a girl. You kind of look at them and say "Gosh, that's so old."

Araceli was raised in home where there were different rules for boys and girls—her brothers could go out to parties but she was allowed to cry. She is trying to equalize both opportunities and "feeling rules" (Hochschild 2003) by her androgynous childrearing techniques.

Marisol Fuentes, like Araceli Trevino, is doing her part to drive the dynamism of culture and transcend narrow, static versions of Mexican gender identities. Marisol considers how she would educate her children to embrace egalitarian gender roles:

There are some traditions that I would probably break with my own children that I went through. Like...the whole patriarchal issue...like worshiping the man, I guess. I'm totally not going to do that.

JMV: How do you see that enacted in your family?

Marisol: Just seeing how controlling my dad is, especially to my mom. Just seeing her cry.... Why do you put up with it? She just takes it and she cries and my dad can be an asshole and...I don't want that kind of thing. I don't want my kids to be afraid of their father. Because I was afraid of my dad for a long time. Me and my sister. He was abusive sometimes. ...I don't want to be afraid of my husband and I don't want to cry all the time.... That just really gets to me when I see my mom cry or just the way he treats my sister sometimes. That rubs me the wrong way. I'm like, "stop it." ...There's a block on [my dad's] emotions. I want somebody who cannot be afraid to show their emotions and be okay with it and not think that they're not...man enough because they're crying in front of whoever.... If I do have sons, I'm hoping to teach them that, that's it's okay to show emotions.

We see here again that parenting is a primary avenue to change ideologies and practices—in this case, gender dynamics—through time and family generations. While Marisol does not yet have children she is using her parents' relationship and childrearing styles as a model to actively revise when she becomes a parent.

Women of all generations I interviewed were outspoken about the need to update and equalize traditional gender norms. While older men did not critique the patriarchal family system that benefited them, younger men often did. Seventeen-year-old third generation Mexican American Manny Medina disliked how his paternal grandfather treated his grandmother and witnessed his father change that pattern in his relations with his wife and children. Manny hopes for the eradication of machismo and spoke eloquently about the equality of the sexes:

My parents taught me not to use gender as criteria when judging people or just in the world. In Oakland, too, all my teachers have educated me this way. ...Females are equal counterparts and in no way should you...think that they are inferior to you and less capable.

Another seventeen-year-old, Andrew Rosenberg, remarked: "I don't really agree with—especially in the older generations—the power that most of the males have." Rick Torres, twenty-one, commented: "I don't like *machistas*. I just don't like tyrants, basically. A lot of men push their weight around a lot. They think that they could run the household.... That's a stereotype, but that is something that exists."

Auscencio has first-hand experience with a macho father whose hard-handed parenting serves as a negative model to be overturned in the next generation. Auscencio was raised by a father who was "wonderful" in many respects but whose disciplinary tactics he will not repeat:

A lot of times after my dad would hit me he'd be like, "you know, my dad would have given it to me ten times worse. You're lucky. You got off easy." "Yeah, whatever." But it certainly gave me an idea of how I don't want to raise my children. ...Violence doesn't get you anywhere. It really, really doesn't. I can see once in a while parents kind of losing it and giving a child a swat. But I think when you are actually angry enough to hold your child down and hit him with something while they're going nuts, you have to be really angry and almost out of control. I don't have that in me.... So, I'm hoping to reverse that angry Mexican father trend. It really doesn't have to be that way.... I think people respond better to talking.

Again, the third generation's parents serve as a model to either uphold or update as the next generation determines its own parenting strategies.

While an anti-macho and anti-patriarchal attitude was predominant among the third generation, it was not a unanimous sentiment. While most third generation women railed against macho Mexican-origin men, some carefully distinguished between domineering and chivalrous. Some women used their natal families as positive examples of how a gendered division of labor in the household was functional, as long as both the husband and wife respected the work of the other. Respect, in addition to men "helping out" in the home may be the key distinctions between these "transitional" gender roles (Hochschild 1989) and "traditional" gender roles of separate spheres. Caitlyn Benavidas reflects on how her parents worked out a transitional division of labor that was mutually beneficial and respectful:

For people outside of our culture they see the gender roles as being as offensive sometimes. Because my mom still, as much of a feminist that she is, she still serves the men in our family first for dinner. She still cleans up after her sons; everything about her is very nurturing. ...I identify that as being Mexican because that is what I see in my own family. ...My dad's not sexist—that's just how things go in our family.... Coming from outside people have this perception of machismo...but it works in our family.... I'm sure I'll be guilty of it myself. I'll be cleaning up after my kids.... Moms clean and cook, moms put you to bed and I think that might be something that is carried down from a lot of generations of women in our culture....

My dad's definitely very much of a feminist man. He's very progressive and definitely doesn't have the machismo issues but at the same time he allows my mom to serve him. He helps around the house, he cooks and cleans, he gardens. He does a lot of everything. They are definitely pretty equal but at the same time because of the way that he grew up with his mom making dinner and setting it out for the men in the family, he doesn't mind if my mom does that. He definitely helps her out and he definitely appreciates her but to him it's not weird to have a woman serving the man and being the wife and the mom. But they share duties. When I was born my mom worked and my dad stayed home with me a lot so he definitely sees both sides. We call him a feminist.

Caitlyn calls both her mother and father "feminists." This politicized language of gender equality marks the difference between earlier eras of male dominance and female subservience. Caitlyn is cautious about destabilizing gender roles yet the gender roles of her parents that she describes are far more egalitarian than the heavy-handed machismo and patriarchy argued against by others. When analyzing the views of the third generation on gender roles and machismo, it is important notice that *change in gender roles has already been occurring*. Gender roles are relatively elastic through generations, meaning the definition of "machismo" or "patriarchy" changes with time and generations. A traditionally gendered division of labor is losing ground in the minds and lives of the third generation as the majority favors an equalization of power dynamics among the sexes.

Conclusion

By the third generation the intensity of ethnicity wanes and becomes more "symbolic." However, the ethnicity of the third generation is not more "expressive" than "instrumental." Mexican Americans have indeed encountered racism that has undermined their acceptance in mainstream U.S. society. Certainly, there are limits to the generalizability of scholarship on white ethnic immigrants. My data show that we

cannot underestimate the costs of non-European ethnicity. While European immigrants faced challenges to integration, these hardships usually abated or disappeared by the third generation. In the case of Mexican Americans, there remains a relatively high degree of racialization that continues for generations after their immigration. My data show that ethnicity remains a real issue—not merely a symbolic one—into the third generation.

Even while the meaning of being Mexican has transmogrified over the generations, many third generation Mexican Americans find their ethnicity to be more than “symbolic” because it is an influential part of their identity. Some respondents found their “two world” perspective to be an advantage of being bi-ethnic and bicultural. Others, however, were beset with identity crises that were neither positive nor voluntary. Rather than permit Mexican heritage to become background and “symbolic,” society racializes people it can identify as Mexican-origin. This imposed ethnicity has very real consequences on these individuals’ self-esteem, self-perceptions, and educational and career opportunities. These third generation Mexican Americans who are middle class and structurally integrated into U.S. occupations, institutions, and mainstream culture live at a racial identification and ethnic culture “crossroads” (Anzaldúa 1987: 195).

Later-generation Mexican Americans exist in a double bind. They do not necessarily seamlessly fit into the U.S. mainstream—their peers in school, work, and community life—yet they also do not necessarily find camaraderie among other Mexican-origin groups. Static and dichotomous visions of “American” and “Mexican” have only hindered race relations and integration processes. As Gilda Ochoa (2004: 223) notes, “historical and contemporary factors...have fostered narrow, binary, and static conceptualizations of Americanness and Mexicanness.” Rather than acknowledge the

vast intra-group heterogeneity of Mexican Americans, some are “self-appointed gatekeepers’ who exclude those individuals who do not possess some socially constructed benchmark of Mexicanness, such as fluency in the Spanish language” (Barrera 1991: 83). Instead of building walls based on sufficiency or deficiency of one’s “cultural toolkit” (Swidler 1986)—such as Spanish language ability—we should recognize the variety within the Mexican American population.

Some third generation individuals had phenotypic features that did get recognized as “Latino.” Others perceive them as racially ambiguous and difficult to classify. In this way, third generation Mexican Americans can traverse multiple racial terrains with equal dexterity. While racial ascriptions remain key in defining (and defending) racial boundaries, some third generation Mexican Americans who are either part European-descent or have lighter skin and hair colors find it easier to “pass,” or be considered non-Hispanic white.

While “flexible ethnicity” affords individuals room to negotiate their racial identity, this is not an agent-centered process or state of being. “Flexible ethnicity” posits that a variety of ethnic scripts are available to actors within a situation of institutional and cultural constraint. “Flexible ethnicity” allows for a number of forms of racial identification. They include: passing as European-descent White, being “Mexican American, light on the ‘Mexican,’” an “American with some spice,” “Mexican American yet I wish I was darker,” and “American by birth, Mexican by culture.” By the U.S.-born third generation, racial descriptors ran the gamut of “American” options, from “with some spice” or “Mexican by culture” to emphasize ethnic distinction, to “light on the ‘Mexican’” to reduce dissimilarity from American mainstream. As the third generation

develops into its own racial generation, bifurcated as it is, it is crafting its own set of racialized identities. These racial identities respond to impinging institutional messages, cultural framings, family teachings, and the socio-political milieu. As the third generation grows up and confirms, or even expands, the range of its flexible ethnicity, it paves the way for revised race relations in the U.S. Yet acceptance by the mainstream is forestalled by continuing racialization. It remains an open question whether Mexican Americans will have a “flexible ethnicity” in a way that does not detract from being “an American” or whether being a “racialized” American will mean continued subjugation that prohibits a “first-class citizen” American identity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined how racial identities of Mexican Americans both change and persist inter-generationally in a family. I have argued that historical period and intergenerational family memory significantly influence the ways in which Mexican immigrants and their descendents incorporate into U.S. society. Chapters Two and Three demonstrate how middle-class, three-generation Mexican American families enact either a “thinly” or “thickly” attached Mexican cultural identity. Different constellations of factors contribute to either outcome, yet marital partner in the second generation, phenotype, surname, and cultural toolkit (Spanish language and traditions) are highly influential in routing families toward either “thinned attachment” or “cultural maintenance.” The Civil Rights Movement was most compelling for those who were already strongly identified as Mexican American, providing a language of civil rights and equal opportunity with which to argue for diversity and multiculturalism. Chapters Four and Five demonstrate how experiences with public discrimination and the educational system are marked by the prevailing racial discourse of the time. This, in turn, shapes how second generation parents teach their children how to navigate racializing social systems. Chapter Six shows that third generation Mexican Americans are in a borderland between “flexible ethnicity” and “racialization,” and that the “assimilability” of Mexican Americans as a group largely rests on the reception of this generation by mainstream society.

The experiences and memories of one family generation often become the memories and struggles of the next generation. I have shown that parents pass more than genes and didactic lessons onto their children. Through personal narratives, parents convey who they are, what they have been through, how they struggled, and what their dreams have been. These lessons, directly or indirectly relayed, are formative for the children who learn them. While there may be some loss of content or resistance where these inter-generational lessons are concerned, there is undoubtedly a high degree of inculcation of those socializing stories. The Rosenberg family demonstrates how a grandmother's and mother's experience of gender oppression at the hands of patriarchal men and the Catholic church impelled out-marriage for the second generation (and likely the third generation as well) and a religious conversion. Experiences of stark racial discrimination in the second generation compelled the second *and* third generations of the Lopez family to embrace their Mexican culture as a reaction to that oppression. The education chapter similarly demonstrates how parents use their own experiences with schooling to guide their children in both academic achievement and lessons on race and gender. Just as peoples' knowledge about their ancestors is a primary factor influencing racial/ethnic ancestry choice (Waters 1990: 36), so too is this inter-generational transfer of knowledge formative for people's larger sense of identity and orientation to their social world.

The Value of Generations

Generations are a useful unit of analysis for understanding how different generations understand and enact race. Generations are embedded within particular historical eras and these periods exhibit dominant racial paradigms and attendant "common sense"

understandings about race (Frankenberg 1993; Haney-López 1996; Omi and Winant 1994). While generation and historical period are confounded, this close connection allows for generation to be used as a proxy for historical era.

Speaking to the relationship between generations and historical period, Karl Mannheim (1946) defines generations as sharing a “particular kind of identity of location, embracing related ‘age groups’ embedded in a historical-social process” (292). This similarity of temporal location makes generations subject to common dominant social, intellectual, and political circumstances. Mannheim further specifies various kinds of bonds between generations, allowing for an affinity between group members based on social location, political leanings, and geographical proximity that produce a particular consciousness. He makes a distinction between an “actual generation,” that is, youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems, and the more substantial bond of a “generation unit.” “Generation units” are groups within the same “actual generation” that have “an identity of responses, a certain affinity in the way in which all move with and are formed by their common experiences” (306). Whether a “generation style” emerges depends on the socio-cultural process, yet the biological fact of generations allows for the possibility of such generation “entelechies” or styles.

Mannheim’s theory of the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another is useful in theorizing inter-generational family memory. Mannheim discusses both “appropriated memories” (those taken over from someone else) and “personally acquired memories” (those created directly from knowledge gained in real situations). Mannheim acknowledges the force of “appropriated memories,” such as lessons handed

from parents to children that constitute background knowledge.¹⁰⁴ Simultaneously, Mannheim underscores the importance of personal experience as the “only sort of knowledge which really ‘sticks’ and it alone has real binding power” (296). Further, Mannheim, like C. Wright Mills (1959), suggests that the intersection of historical events with personal biography is an important nexus. The conjunction of social events with “periods of the self” is a critical way to study the connection between history, generation, and lifecycle. As was true for Native Americans during the Red Power Movement (Nagel 1996), we saw in Chapter Three that the Chicano Movement was powerful for those second generation Mexican Americans who needed a rhetoric of race with which to agitate for “cultural citizenship” (Flores and Benmayor 1997), rights, and visibility.

Scholars who have utilized a “racial-generational approach” (Takahashi 1997) have discovered that political styles and involvement in ethnicity change generationally, and often in reaction to wider political climate (Cohen and Eisen 2000; Takahashi 1997). Others who take a generational approach to answer questions not involving race find that “each generation...has a memory bank of images and code words that instantly summon specific implications to its ‘members’” (Gillespie 1995: 12), causing each generation to respond to the same phenomena in a patterned fashion. I add to this methodology by using the racial-generational approach to study multi-generational families. Analyzing family generations allows us to examine the influence of families in the construction of racial generations. As a “nursery of human nature,” families are foundational to the

¹⁰⁴ In fact, Mannheim explicitly defines childhood as “primary stratum of experience,” upon or against which worldviews are drafted. “Early impressions tend to coalesce into a *natural view* of the world. All later experiences then tend to receive their meaning from this original set, whether they appear as this set’s verification and fulfillment or as its negation and antithesis.” Mannheim, Karl. 1946. *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Human consciousness is formed by an “inner dialectic” and worldview formation is always with reference to the primary stratum.

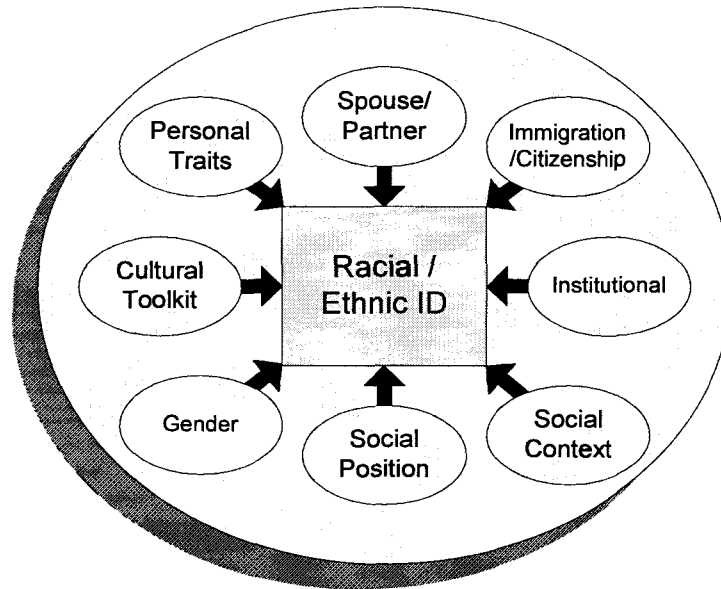
socialization process and identity formation (Cooley 1998: 180). As such, families and inter-generational teachings are key in how people conceive of themselves as part of a racial group, a generation, and a socio-historical process.

Theoretical Contributions

This work extends current scholarship on Mexican Americans, immigration, assimilation, and identity formation by interviewing not just the Mexican immigrants but their children and grandchildren born in the U.S. I refine assimilation and segmented assimilation theory by highlighting the experiential level of immigrants' incorporation. I posit that eight factors contribute to how immigrant families conceive of their racial/ethnic identity and drive incorporation possibilities:

- Spouse/Partner
- Personal traits (phenotype and name)
- Cultural toolkit (i.e., English language ability, Spanish language ability, American traditions/cultural fluency, Mexican traditions/cultural fluency)
- Gender
- Social position (class position, status position)
- Social context (geography, demographic context)
- Institutions (e.g., church, school, work)
- Immigration/Citizenship status (whether one is an immigrant or U.S. citizen)

Figure 1: “Wheel” of Racial Identity Formation



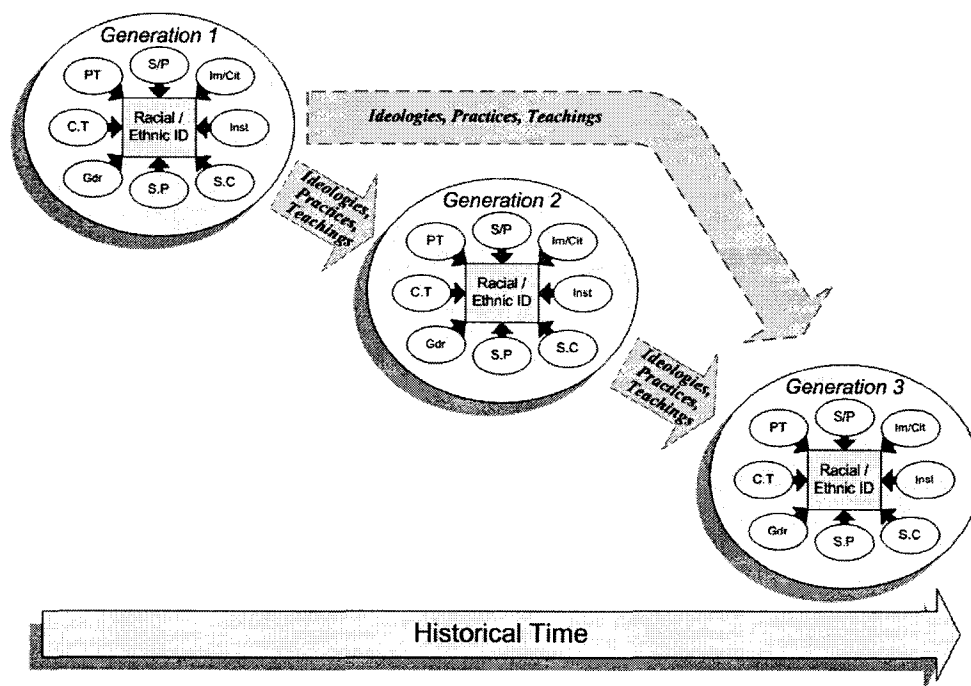
Note that while racial identity looks like it is made up of a multitude of “inputs,” actually there is much *negotiation* that goes on here. Individuals as agents can resist, challenge, partially accept, etc., these inputs or influences, making this a dynamic process.

Various configurations of these factors lead to different ways of racially self-identifying and experiencing one’s social world. Different constellations of these factors lead to the two distinct incorporation patterns discussed—“thinned attachment” and “cultural maintenance”—with spouse/partner and family memory being key elements that influence the outcome. Phenotype, cultural toolkit, discrimination experiences, and parental teachings are particularly significant in shaping racial identity.

Figure 2 demonstrates how I conceptualize the transmission of knowledge across generations. Note that each “wheel” is what is pictured above and duplicated for each of the three generations: grandparent, parent, and child. The generations are linked by a porous arrow of “ideologies, practices, and teachings,” showing how parents and

children, as well as grandparents and grandchildren, are connected. The arrow is dashed rather than solid to indicate that there is slippage in the “ideologies, practices, and teachings” that are taught by elders and the lessons learned by the younger generations. The arrow at the bottom labeled “historical time” indicates that all of these racial identity creation and inter-generational transmission processes are embedded within historical periods.

Figure 2: Transmission of Racial Identity Through Generations



Existing scholarship has not sufficiently considered the significance of family teachings and knowledge in how individuals racially identify and incorporate into mainstream society. Taking a three-generation view of racial identification choices, cultural commitments, parenting styles, and overall life experiences, we see how family ideologies and teachings play into the processes of racial identity formation and assimilation patterns.

My research finds that assimilation is an incremental process, propelled by both quotidian and key decisions and experiences. I elaborate assimilation theory by identifying eight elements (see Figure 1 above) that influence racial identity formation and incorporation processes. These factors can work in different combinations and each influence can have a different direction of force and degree of salience. With respect to assimilation, I have demonstrated two family-oriented incorporation trajectories. Assimilation does *not* occur in a straight line over generations. Since I studied families that had managed to make it into the middle class, I did not study the marginalized subpopulation that segmented assimilation theory describes (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut and Portes 2001). While my sample was structurally assimilated to the U.S. mainstream, they were not necessarily assimilated in terms of identification, marriage, and culture. Thus, my findings problematize assimilationist notions that suggest an eventual, necessary, and desirable outcome of wholesale integration. Instead, I argue for a “bumpy-line” assimilation wherein the process of assimilation is highly uneven (Gans 1992a).

Herbert Gans (1992: 44) argued that straight-line assimilation was unrealistically linear. Straight-line assimilation theory assumes that assimilation would “inevitably end with the eventual total disappearance of all traces of ethnicity after several native born generations.” This perspective developed in part due to national consensus about Americanizing immigrant groups (49). Gans instead argued in favor of a “*bumpy line* theory, the bumps representing various kinds of adaptations to changing circumstances—and with the line having no predictable end” (44). My empirical work confirms and extends Gans’ bumpy line assimilation theory. I have identified several social forces that

influence the speed, direction, and forks in the road of both assimilation and racial identity formation. While not a causal argument, my work suggests factors that promote or forestall cultural assimilation and racial identification.

Lastly, the focus on race across generations (a “racial-generational approach”) is compelling because the political meaning and definition of race is historically contingent. Both government-issued racial and ethnic labels and popular self-descriptors have changed with the socio-political climate (Oboler 1995; Rodriguez 2000). Further, racial self-understandings and political stance vis-à-vis mainstream society also change with socio-political milieu and historical context (Gutiérrez 1995; Haney-Lopez 2003). Thus, “generation styles” develop out of those contexts that bear marks of an era. A family-oriented racial-generation approach goes a step further by including multi-generational families as part of the analysis. By making families central in this methodology, one can decipher the influence of historical context, generation, and family. Tracing changes in content of racial identities across family generations sheds light on the formative power that intergenerational family communication, institutions, historical movements, and micro-interactions all have on racial identities and incorporation patterns.

Empirical Contributions and Policy Implications

Decades-old questions over the fate of immigrant groups still reverberate in American public discourse. Debates over immigration, bilingual education, multiculturalism, and American culture all boil down to questions of American culture and belonging—who “belongs” and who does not. Historically, beginning with the 1790 Naturalization act that restricted naturalization to “white persons,” as well as in contemporary times, U.S.

citizenship and civil rights have been awarded based on race. Lines of whiteness versus otherness are drawn and re-drawn in order to preserve white privilege (such as citizenship rights) and maintain the subjugation of non-whites (Haney-López 1996). In recent years, Californians have voted on various propositions defining racial and ethnic boundaries, addressing issues such as eligibility for social service benefits, the official language of the state, and the lawfulness of collecting racial data had racialized overtones.¹⁰⁵ Some argue that the definition of whiteness may expand to include groups previously defined as non-White provided they culturally conform to whiteness to an acceptable degree (Guinier and Torres 2002; Warren and Twine 1997).

The question of if or how well Mexican Americans will integrate into mainstream U.S. society has persisted for decades. Peter Skerry (1993) argues that Mexican Americans should act like the mainstream and not become involved in racial (as opposed to ethnic) identity politics. He asks the important question: in this increasingly black/non-black society, what will Mexican Americans do (Skerry 1993)? Of course, this

¹⁰⁵ Four California propositions are noteworthy: 1) California Proposition 187, a 1994 ballot initiative billed as the "Save Our State" initiative, was designed to deny illegal immigrants social services, health care, and public education. It passed with 59% of the vote but was overturned by a federal court. 2) California Proposition 209 was on the 1996 ballot and proposed to amend the state Constitution to prohibit public institutions from taking race, sex, or ethnicity into account in hiring or admittance decisions. Supported by then-University of California Regent Ward Connerly and opposed by pro-affirmative action groups, it was voted into law with 54% of the vote. The U.S. District Court blocked enforcement of the measure and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals subsequently overturned that ruling. Proposition 209 has subsequently been the subject of many lawsuits in state courts. 3) California Proposition 227, the "English Language in Public Schools," passed with 61% of the vote (39% opposed) in 1998. Supporters believe that heavy English-immersion rather than bilingual education is the best way to teach English to limited English proficient (often immigrant) children. Opponents believe that English-only detracts from necessary bilingual education and is a coercive and authoritarian measure that undervalues cultural diversity. 4) California Proposition 54, officially titled the "Racial Privacy Initiative," was on a 2003 special election ballot. It failed to pass with 36.1% votes in favor and 63.9% against. Had it passed, Proposition 54 would have prevented the state of California from using racial classifications in most of its business. Supporters of the measure said it was the first step towards a "colorblind" society, while opponents felt that it would make it more difficult for the state to provide services and identify and correct racial disparities.

is not merely a question of volition but depends in no small part on how receptive mainstream society is toward this group. The notion of Mexican Americans as “unassimilable” has permeated public thought (Heller 1966; Huntington 2004a), perhaps perpetuating resistance to Mexican American integration. Indeed, nearly forty years ago researchers of Mexican Americans in California and Texas remarked:

To discover yet another ethnic group that is showing signs of assimilation would be nothing out of the ordinary if it were not for the widespread belief that Mexican Americans were ‘unassimilable’—forever alien to the American way of life—and predestined for low social status. The general experience of immigrant populations in the United States was rarely if ever projected to this minority.... *[T]hese stubborn notions are in need of revision.* (Grebler, Moore, and Guzman 1970: 10, emphasis in original)

Current research debates the assimilation patterns of Latinos (Alba 2006; Bean, Chapa, Berg, and Sowards 1994; Chavez 1992; Livingston and Kahn 2002; Millard and Chapa 2004; Miller, Chavez, Community, and Policy 1994; Ortiz 1996; Reed, Hill, Jepsen, and Johnson 2005; Smith 2003; Smith 2005; Valdes 1996). When a generational approach is taken (i.e., controlling for birth cohort and generation simultaneously, thus correcting the problem with cross-sectional analyses)¹⁰⁶ the picture becomes clearer that linguistic, educational, occupational, and income (in terms of wages) assimilation is occurring (Alba 2006; Perlmann 2005; Smith 2003; Smith 2006). Richard Alba (2006) argues that “it is the diversity within groups of patterns of incorporation into American society that needs recognition today,” and my work attempts to show that diversity of incorporation.

My evidence suggests that Mexican Americans *can* in fact structurally assimilate and become middle class. While some people are accepted more readily (largely due to phenotype), a contingent of second and third generation Mexican Americans remain

¹⁰⁶ Instead of measuring first, second, and third generations all from the same Census or survey such that they all respondents are, for example, forty years old, researchers align the data to approximate three generations of birth cohorts such that respondents’ ages are, for example, twenty, fifty, and eighty.

racialized despite assimilation. My findings are congruent with “selective acculturation,” that is, adaptation that includes fluent bilingualism in the second generation (less so in the third generation) and preserves channels of communication across generations, values from the native culture, and supportive networks in the immigrant community (Rumbaut and Portes 2001). Selective acculturation effectively integrates new immigrants “into the ladders of socioeconomic mobility of American society” (Rumbaut and Portes 2001: 316) while also preserving bonds across family generations that provide a “clear reference point to guide [children’s] future lives” (Rumbaut and Portes 2001: 309) Barriers to integration and adaptation include encounters with institutional and interpersonal discrimination that racialize Mexican Americans despite their assimilation.

These findings suggest that race-based policies such as affirmative action are necessary measures to counteract historical and contemporary exclusionary mechanisms. If the state has historically deprived U.S.-born Mexican Americans of actionable citizenship rights and continues to deprive Mexican immigrants of fair working conditions with living wages, the state should be responsible for devising a remedy.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, while some politicians, journalists, and scholars call for the eradication of race conscious policies (such as affirmative action), race has historically shaped state policy (Oliver and Shapiro 1995) and race-conscious policies are necessary to counteract the ways in which racial discrimination disadvantages racial minorities.

The literature on immigration recognizes that federal and state aid to immigrants facilitates their settlement in the U.S. (Reitz 1998b; Zhou and Bankston 1998). While human capital that matches the needs of labor market is key to successful adjustment to a

¹⁰⁷ See Oliver, Melvin L. and Thomas M. Shapiro. 1995. *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. New York: Routledge. for an argument on the “racialization of state policy” regarding African Americans.

host country (Steinberg 2001), federal and state immigration policy that grants work visas with a path to citizenship would be the first step to incorporating Mexican immigrant laborers who build lives in the U.S. While I did not ask my respondents if they or their parent(s) came to work in the U.S. under the Bracero Program, a contract labor program operative from 1942-1964, one can infer that many were granted employment through this program. At least half of the first generation immigrants I interviewed arrived during the period when the Bracero Program was in effect and many first-generation parents I was not able to interview also arrived during that period. The vast majority of the Mexican immigrant laborers of my sample¹⁰⁸ were employed in agriculture and railroad construction, the two industries for which the labor program was designed to recruit. (Please see Appendix F for a list of first generation immigrants' occupations.)¹⁰⁹ Given the time period of entrance to the U.S. as well as the preponderance of employment in agriculture (farm work, canneries, and warehouses) and railroad construction, it is reasonable to infer that the Bracero Program recruited and employed a large percentage of the first generation of my three-generation families. The Bracero Program provided immigrants a foothold in the U.S. labor market and facilitated middle class occupational attainment in a matter of one or two generations. If the government can support the inclusion of Mexican laborers—rather than perpetuate their alienation—the force of one racializing agent will be curbed and public discourse and sentiment may follow.

¹⁰⁸ This also includes parents of second generation Mexican Americans who were not in my sample.

¹⁰⁹ These data were derived from asking the immigrants directly and, if unavailable for an interview, asking the second generation. Through this direct and indirect method I have data on the employment sectors of the first generation Mexican immigrants and their marital partners for all twenty-nine families in my sample.

Directions for Future Research

This research design focused on middle class¹¹⁰ Mexican American families in two urban regions in California. The middle class composition of my respondent pool offers a natural extension for future research. My sample of middle class families is clearly marked by an upwardly mobile class experience. Certainly, other families remain in the lower class, even over generations, so comparing middle class families with lower class families would be an important extension. Much literature focuses on poor Latino families but by using a multi-generational research design, one could assess how low socioeconomic status affects racial identity formation and incorporation possibilities. By comparing middle class families with lower class families we could better determine who achieves upward mobility, how this is accomplished, and how class affects racial identity and incorporation patterns.

A second expansion of this work would be a regional comparison. California has a particular history and demographic mix, especially as it relates to the Chicano Movement¹¹¹ and historical and continuing Mexican immigration. Therefore, a comparison with other regions, such as Southwestern and Midwestern states with sizeable Mexican American populations and/or immigration flows would be fruitful. The topics of immigration and Mexican Americans are brimming on the national consciousness and are particularly prominent on the minds of Californians. In the last few years, newspaper headlines about Mexican immigration, Mexican guest worker programs, Border Fence

¹¹⁰ I assessed whether families fit this middle class status based on their income, education, occupation, and overall socioeconomic standing at the time of the interview, as opposed to at the time of immigration. These families, thus, had three generations to improve their socioeconomic class status.

¹¹¹ The United Farm Workers of America (UFW), a labor union founded in 1962 by Cesar Chavez, Philip Vera Cruz, Dolores Huerta, and Larry Itliong, was very active in labor organizing and non-violent social protests (including the Delano Grape Strike in 1965) in California.

Bills, and Minutemen militias have been abundant. In the four months following the May Day 2006 national rally that called for immigrants' labor rights, a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, living wages, de-criminalization of immigrants, and de-militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, coverage in the *Los Angeles Times* was plentiful. Various headlines read: "The protests of allegiance," "A real fence for a real problem," "How L.A. kept out a million migrants," "Those Are Dollars, Not Pesos—Keep Them Here," "Can-do spirit fuels immigrants," "Get out, but leave the quesadilla," "Governor [Schwarzenegger] Refuses Bush Request for Border Troops," "One More Embrace, Then Slam the Door, and "Borders without visas." An inter-state or regional comparison would illuminate the ways in which my findings are specific to California and would underscore the findings that are transposable to other locales.

Another possible direction for future research on racial identity formation is an emergent but under-explored theme from my data: the view that that race is divisive and should be replaced by an emphasis on "humanity." Some respondents argued that "race" should be de-emphasized and subsumed under the unifying category of "humanity."¹¹² As Alfonzo Avila contends, "we need to shift away from that pride of race and shift into the mode of a pride of being a human being." For some, a religious community imparted this broad conception of the human race. Some respondents tempered this critique of race as a category as they considered that race might need to remain a social scientific category for social justice purposes. While race is divisive and has material consequences in terms of resource allocation, racial classifications are required to make compensatory measures and cannot be eliminated prior to reaching an "equal playing

¹¹² A minority of my respondents commented on race as divisive; many merely understood race to be a fact of life rather than consider it a phenomenon that could be critiqued.

field,” economic parity, and health outcome equality.¹¹³ Both the resistance to using racial categories because of their divisive nature and the role religion may play in augmenting the focus on “humanity” are potential areas of further research.

Finally, researchers could continue to carry out research on other racial or ethnic populations to discover to what extent my findings regarding middle-class Mexican Americans are relevant to other groups. I have attempted to broaden both racial identity formation theory and assimilation theory in a way that is germane to other racial and ethnic groups. I have highlighted intergenerational family memory, historical period, and eight other social factors that influence racial identity and assimilation patterns. I have also demonstrated that racial titles depend both on social context and historical era and that parental teachings and marital partner are also significant in how tightly a native culture is embraced. Further, I endorse bumpy-line assimilation that understands incorporation patterns to be uneven, non-stepwise, and that attachment to certain American ways can speed assimilation whereas attachment to certain native culture elements can stall assimilation. Empirically testing the robustness of my theoretical contributions by studying other populations would test the limits of the generalizability of my study and uncover the theoretical insights that are applicable to other groups.

Summary

In this dissertation I have examined the racial identity and assimilation patterns of three generation Mexican American families. By investigating the experiential realm and

¹¹³ The opposition to California Proposition 54 in 2003 turned on this claim that racial classification systems are necessary in order to keep records of resource and service allocations, health outcomes, etc. If racial data is not collected, racial disparities cannot be traced and redress and restitution cannot be made. In the absence of a “colorblind society”—where race or color does not influence life chances or life outcomes—it is premature to stop collecting this racial data.

inquiring about numerous social sites, I have discovered various factors that contribute to racial identity and a sense of cultural belonging, be it American or Mexican. How people engage in self-identification is variable, dependent on personal factors such as phenotype, surname, and cultural toolkits, as well as structural factors such as socio-cultural context and treatment by institutions such as schools and workplaces. Mexican Americans cannot exclusively determine the racial and ethnic labels they prefer; instead, they are constrained by how others perceive and racialize them. Regardless of how Mexican Americans may choose to identify, outsider perspectives that classify them as non-White severely limit the possibilities of having a life experience liberated from racializing interference. Some scholars promote curtailing racial identity politics in order to foster assimilation (Skerry 1993), yet this option is not solely up to Mexican Americans but is partially dependent on how the U.S. mainstream reacts to and treats this population. The lives of Mexican Americans, and Latinos at large, are structured by the racializing experiences they have in public spheres, and these experiences are often at odds with the racial lessons and self-labeling they learn from their families.

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX:

A NOTE ON SOCIOLOGICAL REFLEXIVITY AND “SITUATED INTERVIEWS”

The Question of Reciprocity

I am always concerned with the question of reciprocity. When people agree to do interviews with me, I get a couple hours of their time and a piece of their story that I fashion into a publishable work product. What do my respondents get? They get to spend time with someone who cares to hear their story but who will not have an ongoing reciprocal relationship with them. Robert Weiss (1994) suggests that people are eager to talk about themselves, that they get satisfaction at having an eager audience, and that they may experience some relief or gratification by reflecting on their lives (Weiss 1994: p. 122). True to Weiss's assessment, interviewees told me that they benefited from and appreciated an interviewer with a sympathetic ear who provides an atmosphere for self-reflection.

In the interview situation, I provide my respondents an opportunity to talk about themselves in an unselfish way. I believe there is a self-building or revising function to the self-telling that occurs in the interview. Interviews are a free space in which people are afforded the time and encouragement to reflect on their lives. While some respondents found the interview difficult to the extent it brought up sensitive topics, most ended their encounter with me with an expression of neutral or positive emotion. Interviewee Albert Schultz seemed to appreciate reflecting on his own life with an interested listener. While an interview situation and a therapy session have very different goals (and listeners with very different professional training), they both hinge on

atmospheres of active listening. Albert Schultz observed, “wow, this is like therapy. I haven’t been this open with anyone besides my close friends in a long time.” I took that to be a compliment toward the atmosphere of trust and confidence that I try to foster in the interviewer-interviewee interaction.

Manny Medina reflected on his interview experience with me this way: “I really don’t think of this stuff all that much so it was a good chance to think about new things.” Manny finished the interview with a renewed appreciation of his parents’ support and contribution to his life. While I was not pushing any perspective (be it assimilationist or pluralistic), Manny’s deliberation during the course of the interview about what it means to be an American with Mexican heritage led him to consider how to strike a balance that suits him and his ideals. He commented at the end, “Wow, you’ve really got me thinking that when I go to college I really should start or join a club that is with and for Latinos. Just to keep it up. But definitely not to overdo it and have it be to the exclusion of my American identity.” It is this quality of thoughtfulness that I hope my respondents engage in and find productive as a consequence of our brief time together.

◇ *Formal Reciprocity*

Regarding the issue of my reciprocity to high schools for their assistance in my recruitment process, I was asked by a vice principal of one of the high schools to give a speech at the MECHA (Latino students organization) graduation awards ceremony, which I accepted.

◇ *Informal Reciprocity*

I offered to send interviewees a summary of my conclusions after I had completed the analysis phase of the project. This pleased a number of respondents—particularly those heavily involved in their local Latino community. In response, some commented that such an offer made them feel rewarded and put at ease because it showed that my mindset was not just to take but to give back as well. I reaffirmed that I desire to give back to my respondents and the community because there would be no project without their participation. Further, I hope this study benefits the public and provides a way for people (not just members of the group studied) to better understand themselves and each other.

In at least one instance a parent of teenagers, knowing my educational background, desired my input on his children's college options. With younger family members applying to college the following fall, he asked for advice on the application process, selecting the right school, and financial aid.

◇ *Mirroring or Fueling an Interest in Family*

It is interesting that—as many of my respondents have indicated—my research asks questions that interviewees themselves enjoy pondering. Either they have mused on these questions beforehand or my investigation prompts a new quest for them. One woman who was too geographically distant to take part in the study wrote over email: “It's interesting that your e-mail was forwarded to me...as I was recently thinking of my family (parent, aunts & uncles) who have passed away and who have taken our family history to their graves. I have been hoping that me and my generation of cousins asked enough questions and know our history.”

Similarly, interviewee Michael Jimenez phoned me after the interview to say that he wanted to use my family-based interview project as an opportunity to open up his family history. He wished to gain more knowledge about his family and ethnic roots. As much interest as he expressed in his family history during the interview, he lacked detailed family stories. It is unclear if my questions made him realize his deficiency of familial knowledge or whether he craved a more in-depth family history before my interview with him. Regardless, *he saw a way to use the interview with me as a tool for his own goals*. I felt cheered by this because the question of reciprocity always looms for me; it is easier to see what my interviewees provide me rather than the other way around. While I walk away with a tape-recorded narrative that I will eventually craft into a publishable piece of scholarship, my respondents have shared two hours and a part of their life story with me and the benefit to them is less obvious. Perhaps my interviewees experience some emotional or psychological relief by talking to me—but there is the alternative possibility of the interview dredging up buried and best-forgotten histories. Further, I am trained as a sociologist, not a psychologist or a social worker and so my ability to aid my interviewees is severely limited. Given these concerns and constraints, I was always heartened to hear that my interviewees can see ways to use their interviews with me for their own personal goals and benefit. I would certainly be glad to be seen as a vehicle for family communication and memory transmission.

Assertions of Solidarity

In response to my email advertisements, many people choose to express solidarity with me and my work. While I drafted the email content in English some people responded in

Spanish for a flare of camaraderie (even though they would have no way of knowing my Spanish level). A typical email reads: "...I would be honored to help you with your data & would enjoy contributing to such a much needed body of knowledge. Please let me know I can help an *Hermana* [sister] out!!!! Paz [peace], [Signed]." A couple things are noteworthy here. First, is the claim that my research area is a "needed body of knowledge" which I think prompted a number of volunteers. Potential interviewees see themselves as interesting, important, and under-studied. Second, is the imagined sisterhood/brotherhood by the writer's use of "*hermana*." I am certain that I benefited from a sense of "imagined community" (Anderson 1991). As potential respondents envision me as a part of community to which they belong (in particular if they view it as marginalized, under-studied, or threatened) they are more inclined to "help a [sister] out!!!!" Third, is the codeswitching into Spanish. This intermingling of Spanish words into a primarily English text further buttresses the idea of an imagined community, one that is braced by language. Other sign-offs at the end of emails offering interest or assistance included: "siempre para nuestra gente..." [always for our people] and "Buena suerte y adelante mujer!" [good luck and keep going, woman]. I received many "congratulations" for conducting my research, people often saying "thank you" for doing the work that I am doing because they believe it to be necessary.

Recruitment: "I'm a Student, not a Telemarketer"

When calling families that had been referred to me as possible interview subjects, I generally tried to introduce myself quickly before I was mistaken for a telemarketer. Indeed, as I introduced myself over the phone to the husband of a woman I have been

trying to reach, I explained that a member in a community organization referred me to her and that I am a Ph.D. student at the University of California, Berkeley. The husband chuckled and said, “In other words, you are not a telemarketer.”

This presumption was not unusual. In working with the Montes/Rosenberg family highlighted in Chapter Two, Tamara and Jillian needed to cajole Maria into doing the interview. Maria’s family reported her to be a very “strong” woman but “shy,” and probably not prone to think that her narrative was of “use” to a social science researcher. It no doubt helped that I conducted interviews with her other family members first and that they were able to report neutral or positive experiences with me to her. They assured her I would not ask embarrassingly personal questions—or that if I did she could skip them—and that it was an “easy” conversation with a young woman doing a “school project.” She—as other initially reluctant older interviewees—warmed up to the idea of assisting me in my education.

At the end of the interview with Maria, which had gone smoothly, Maria’s fifty-something year old niece came into the house for a visit. Maria had earlier invited me to speak to the niece about whether she and her family might participate in my project. Maria introduced me and I explained that we had just finished an interview for a project I am doing and would she consider doing the same. She immediately and curtly said “no.” I said, “thanks anyway” and dropped the subject. Then Maria interjected that “she had been afraid I would ask lots of personal questions, but I didn’t, it was just about her, her opinions, her stories and history.” “Plus,” she added with emphasis, “it’s for a big school project she’s doing, so I wanted to help out.” The icy tone and demeanor dropped from the niece and she said, “oh, sorry about that, that was just my automatic reaction. I

thought you were a reporter or something, so I slipped into my mode I get into with telemarketers where you just say ‘no’ off the bat.” She softened after Maria backed up my request with her own positive experience—Maria said she “enjoyed talking to me.” The niece ultimately still declined, this time saying that she didn’t think her mother would like to participate. The emphasis on people “helping me with my education” was unexpectedly important in securing interviewees. It was also useful to do an interview with a younger generation respondent first and having them report their experience to the older generation so they could make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Interview Format: Triangulation between Three Generations

One of the strengths of interviewing several people from different generations in the same family was the way I could parse out similarities and differences among the narratives. This way, I achieved both an understanding of common experiences within the family as well as points of departure. For instance, in the Vargas family, I interviewed the first and second generation women who were very strongly identified as Mexican and immersed in the Mexican community. To my surprise, the third generation descendant had virtually nothing to report as far as family stories or events that highlighted her Mexican identity. Her mother made is sound like they “lived and breathed” Mexican culture and yet the third generation woman came up blank when I asked questions about Mexican cultural practices. Here, the third generation interview contradicted the assessments of the earlier two generations. I treat all interviewee narratives as explaining their social worlds the way they see and experience them. To

that end, perspective—in this case generational perspective—matters. The differences between generations was stark in this example; yet that is valuable data that is a benefit of conducting interviews with multiple family members about the same topic. This is a lesson of the maxim in qualitative methodology that different people in the same family may have two entirely different experiences of that same family. This may be due to personality, positioning in the family, or external reasons, and these intra-familial differences may be compounded by how much each interviewee chooses to reveal.

Interview Format: Toggling Between Active Listening and my Interview Schedule

A few years ago in a Methods class, Arlie Hochschild commented, “sometimes the interviewer’s questions are interruptions.” In the course of an interview, I would juggle peering down periodically at my interview schedule while at the same time listening to the interviewee’s narrative for thematic leads to follow. As I became comfortable with interviewing and my interview schedule seared into my memory, I realized that I was conversationally delivering my questions. I was playing the game of mentally “checking off the questions the interviewee has answered” while still managing to keep an ear open for attention-grabbing pieces of narrative to curiously follow. As a pop musical artist remarked in an interview with a radio disk jockey, she “dislikes it when she is in interviews with people and they are looking down at their papers for the next question rather than listening to what she was saying.”¹¹⁴ Hearing this comment from a much-interviewed popular culture star, I thought how minimizing my reliance on a referring to

¹¹⁴ This is taken from a radio interview with musical artist Jewel that was conducted by Alice 97.3 FM on March 15, 2005.

an interview schedule could ease an interviewee's concern over not being heard but being pushed forward without regard for where his/her narrative might direct the conversation.

My task as a social science researcher is to look beyond what meets the eye of the naïve observer. This penetration entails figuring out how interviewees conceive of themselves and experience their place within the world. To do this, some interviewees required a stream of questions to guide their narrative, while others took more assertive control in telling their story. While the latter style required fewer prompts from me, I would occasionally use questions as guideposts to keep the conversation on topic. Due to the unfolding of the interview process that is built on a rapport with the interviewee that encourages his/her participation as well as the interviewer's active listening skills, each interview takes on its own shape. Even with an interview schedule, some questions were covered in depth while others were briefly touched on. Depending on interviewer-interviewee dynamic and rapport, an interviewee's life history, and personal style, the interview takes on its own shape. Beginning with the same recipe, each interview is unique. Given these flexible contingencies plus a life story and perspective that can be told from myriad angles at any time, I've come to believe that all interviews are the result of an interviewee's story that is told *in interaction with* the interviewer.

On Being a "Gendered" Interviewer: Interviewee Surveillance

True to Simone de Beauvoir's revolutionary statement, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Beauvoir 1978), I found that I was not just an interviewer but a woman interviewer. Of course, I was not just a woman interviewer but unmarried, American-born, educated, middle-class, mixed ethnicity (European mix and Mexican),

light-skinned, dark-haired, Spanish-surnamed, heterosexual, and young. The social location of all interviewers bears on the interview dynamic, so this is not new. What is of interest to me here is the ways in which I was constituted as a “woman” in the context of some interviews.

My unmarried status was jarring to a few older generation respondents who expected a twenty-eight year old woman like myself to be married. This is probably because of their youthful experience of seeing marriages occur at a relatively early age, in combination with their racialized expectation that a Mexican American woman, in particular, should be married by thirty.¹¹⁵ This is illustrated in my interview with eighty-four year old first generation immigrant Juan Ramos. To my surprise, as I was packing up to leave and during the “wind down” after-interview conversation, Juan asked if I was married. He sounded shocked when I stated “no.” He came back with, “What?! No?! But you are so pretty!” He is of an older generation, and yet he was stunned that I upset his expectation that a woman in her late-twenties would/should be married. In making sense of me, he had to reconfigure—if briefly—his notion of gender in the world around him. I, on the other hand, was momentarily gendered as he stereotyped me as a woman who should be married.

An interview with second generation Lee Morelos echoed this theme of a respondent surveilling my marital status and policing my gender. Unlike Juan, Lee was not shocked by my unmarried status, because he is a businessman used to seeing women delay marriage for the sake of education or a profession. Lee took on a paternalistic voice as he offered up his gender-making advice. Lee asked near the end of the

¹¹⁵ Unwed female respondents hovering around the age of thirty also spoke of this expectation, with some disdain.

interview, “have you ever been married?” I said “no.” He replied, “Wow, well, I’d have thought that someone should have snatched you up by now.” I smiled slightly and nodded, knowing it was a compliment. Lee’s wife was easy with the exchange and as they both walked me outside they asked me more questions about my experience and background. In the context of a discussion of marriage, Lee boisterously laughed and said, “What you need is a big Anglo man!” He slapped my back and said, “Oh, I’m just kidding.” Just then his wife was chiming in loudly, “No, she just needs a good man. That’s what counts, she wants a good man.” Lee continued, “well, in my day, people got married young. In my children’s day they got married in their mid to late 20’s. Now it seems like if a woman wants a career she puts off having a husband and having children. What has been your experience? Are you putting marriage off till after school or have you not found the right man yet?” Upon providing a brief answer Lee offered some unsolicited counsel:

If I can offer you some advice: stay choosy. You also don’t want to marry someone who is not as educated as you. You don’t want him to always have that sense of insecurity with you. So you shouldn’t marry a farmhand—not that they’re not good people—but he wouldn’t be able to understand you and you are going to need that. So don’t marry down, if you can help it. You want someone who is at your level and can be there with you and understand you. Plus you just don’t want to put that insecurity in someone and have that be an issue, have that always be there and have him feel like he’s not enough for you.

I nodded, listening. He followed up, “So it’s good to be choosy, but don’t be too choosy!”

Lee was enforcing gender roles through his well-intentioned paternalistic advice. He cautioned me against being over-educated in comparison to a future spouse, lest I intimidate him. I should not partner with someone below my educational station because

I might emasculate him. If a man is not the “head of the house”—or perhaps one of two nearly equal heads of household—in terms of breadwinning and education level then an unhappy union would ensue. In this gendering process, I was told to stay within certain gender bounds for the good of my future relationship. I claim this is part of a gendering process, for I certainly cannot imagine him telling a *man* not be more educated than his future female partner—this would be *expected* and would not cause alarm over a highly educated man making his wife insecure about her lesser level of educational attainment. In the spirit of looking out for me, Lee finally advised me to strike a balance between being “choosy” but not “too choosy,” for assertiveness on the marriage market is traditionally less the business of women than men. If one is concerned about tradition, anyhow, and tradition has been less favorable to women than men.

Apart from marital expectations and advice that were cast my direction, another way in which I “became” a woman was through the act of interviewing itself. Listening has long been considered a particularly feminine virtue. While “equality feminism”¹¹⁶ sociologists have long battled the socially-constructed quality of such sex-typed traits, it is still popularly held that women are “better” at listening than men. Thus, as a female interviewer, I sometimes fell victim to this sex-typed role of listener. While I actively engaged the interviewee with questions, I still spoke less often and was thus the more passive of the interlocutors. Understanding listening as a traditional female trait—one that perhaps men select on as they search for heterosexual partners—sheds an interesting light on an exchange I had with Moises Ramos (Juan Ramos’s grandson) at the end of my interview with him. I interviewed Moises first and we had arranged that I would return to the home that he and his grandfather, Juan, share for an interview another day with Juan.

¹¹⁶ “Equality feminism” is contrasted with “difference feminism” here.

At the end of the interview, Moises looked up at me and started chuckling. I asked why and he said, “well, I was going to ask you when I can see you again.” He bowed and shook his head in mild embarrassment. Shrugging his shoulders he added, “I don’t know, that’s just what you say to a woman.” I don’t know if this question was meant to refer to the fact that I will be returning to interview his grandfather or whether he in fact wanted to see me in a social situation. He had laughed self-effacingly at his impulse but what I found interesting was the impulse itself. If listening is coded as feminine and I, as a female interviewer engage this behavior as professional conduct, then the confusion of professional versus personal is fascinating. This dynamic of the man being revealing and the woman being in the position of the “empathetic listener” mimics traditional gender roles of an “active” man and a “passive” woman. Further, traditional gender roles would expect the woman to be emotionally sensitive, to elicit emotion and sharing from the man and of respond sympathetically to him. Such gendered expectations are relevant here as in the professional capacity of interviewer I end up fitting role of an “empathetic female with whom males can discuss emotional topics.” My inquisitiveness and responsiveness could have fostered the illusion of a non-professional relationship. Additionally, the content of the interviews themselves was of a personal nature. This furthered the conceit of the interview situation bordering on a sex-typed social situation.

Insider Dilemma

Patricia Zavella, a Chicana feminist sociologist, instructs: “we [researchers] should realize that we are almost always simultaneous insiders and outsiders” (Zavella 1993). She points out that studying one’s own population (be it race, class, gender, etc.) and

being an “insider” carries advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it can facilitate access to that population. On the other hand, it can amplify feelings of responsibility to the population that exceeds the researcher’s abilities or resources.

I have wondered if my subject matter impelled highly positively identified Mexican Americans to participate in my research project. For example, activists in the Chicano Movement in the 1960s may be inclined him to agree to participate in my study because they believe that their involvement may further the cause of Chicano representation. I can be seen as furthering this cause in two ways: 1) through academic work that raises consciousness about Chicano history and presence and 2) as an educator who is Mexican American herself and concerned with representing her bicultural background. Speaking to this point, interviewees would periodically refer to me as a “good example of a successful Latino/a.” For example, Tina Acevedo made it clear she was interested in helping out because she thought my project was worthwhile and because she is always in support of “nuestra gente” [our people]. There is a way in which my insider status (at least by Mexican heritage, if not gender in this case as well) that helps me gain access to respondents. Some respondents saw my work as important and, above that, saw “one of us” doing something to understand “our” culture. While this is somewhat reductionist—because I am not only of Mexican descent but of European heritage as well, a woman, educated, middle class, and so on—being an “insider” lets me pass the first test of authenticity and prompts acquiescence to the interview. While I cannot guess at the myriad motivations respondents had for participating in my research, I suspect that my being an “insider” on some axes of social position facilitated participation.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Main Themes

- 1) *How do these three generations of Mexican Americans racially identify?*
 - i. *How does racial identity shift through time and context?*
- 2) *What are the key events or influences that shaped racial identity?*
- 3) *How do family stories or family histories serve as a vehicle for racial transmission? (How people craft family stories about race and how this is both reflective of and informs social identity.)*
 - i. *How are racial identities transmitted over family generations?*
 - ii. *What is the content of these identities?*
- 4) *What is the progression of the three-generation family (type of assimilation/incorporation)?*

Family History & Inter-Generational Storytelling

- **KEY PEOPLE:** Who were the key people in your family in your childhood?
- **RELATIONSHIPS:** Could you briefly describe your relationship with your: grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren (specifically those involved in this project)?
- **LESSONS:** What are some of the most important lessons your parents tried to teach you when you were growing up?
- **FAMILY STORIES OR MEMORIES:** Do you have any favorite “family stories or memories” from your youth?
- **TRADITIONS:** Are there any traditions or customs that stand out for you as you think about your youth?
- **SAYINGS:** What kinds of pithy sayings or quotations would your parents (or grandparents) commonly use?
- **STORIES FROM PARENTS:** Are there any particularly memorable stories that your parents told you about their life?
- **[GEN 2 & 3] INFO TO PASS:** What are some pieces of information about your parents that it is important that you remember about them and that you’ve tried to pass on to your children?
- **[GEN 3] STORIES FROM GRANDPARENTS:** Are there any particularly memorable stories that your grandparents told you that had to do with their life?
- **[GEN 2] INFO TO PASS:** What are some stories or pieces of information about your life that is important for you to share with your children?
- **[GEN 1 & 2] STORIES TOLD:** When your children (and grandchildren) were growing up, what stories did you tell them about your life?
 - What kinds of lessons or knowledge were you hoping for your children (and grandchildren) to learn through your sharing?

Immigration

- **GEN 1:** Why did you decide to come to the U.S.? How did you come here?
- **GEN 1:** Were there any stories that you told your children and grandchildren about your move to the U.S.?

- **GEN 2 & 3:** Could you tell me how your (grand)parents' came to the U.S.?
- **GEN 2 & 3:** Do you recall any stories about your (grand)parents' immigration? Were there any stories that stick in your memory that your (grand)parents' told you about their moving to the U.S.?

Racial Labels & Identity

- **EARLIEST MEMORY OF RACE:** Could you please tell me about the earliest memory you have about “something called race” (whether or not it was named at this point)?
- **MIRROR:** How do you think of yourself? When you look in the mirror, what do you see?
- **DESCRIBE SELF RACIALLY:** Could you describe yourself in racial or ethnic terms?
 - WHY X OF ALL OPTIONS?
 - MEANING FOR YOU?
 - CONSISTENT OR SHIFTED THROUGH TIME?
 - ASSUMPTIONS: What race/ethnicity do other people assume you are? What kinds of assumptions do people make about you?
 - ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE TO BE PERCEIVED [PASSING]: Have you ever found it to your advantage or disadvantage to be perceived one way or another? [Passing]
- **FIRST TIME LABELED:** Do you remember the first time someone told you that you were (Mexican) Mexican American?
 - WHO?
 - EXPLANATION & MEANING?
- **[ALL] MEANING:** What does it mean to you to be Mexican American?
- **[ALL] WHERE RACIAL ID COMES FROM:** How would you describe what your racial identity is and where it comes from?
- **[ALL] KEY EVENTS:** Are there any key events in your life that shaped your racial identity?
- **[ALL] MAGNIFIED MOMENTS:** Are there any events or situations where you had a heightened awareness of your race (“magnified moments”)?
 - AFFECT: Did this experience affect your ideas about yourself?
- **[ALL] LANDMARK EVENTS:** Was there any awareness of race/ethnicity in the “landmark events” of her life—leaving home, educational choice, career choice, marital choice, or parenting style?

Family Influence on Racial Identity

- **[ALL] PARENTS' TEACHING:** What did your parents tell or “teach you” you about what it meant to be Mexican American?
- **[Gen3] GRANDPARENTS' TEACHING:** What did your grandparents tell or “teach you” you about what it meant to be Mexican American?:
- **[ALL] ONE ELEMENT FROM PARENTS:** If your parents could select one element for you to hold onto from your Mexican background, what would it be?
- **[ALL] TEACH MEANING:** How will (did) you tell your children about what it means to be Mexican American?

- [ALL] ONE ELEMENT FOR KIDS: If you could select one element for your child(ren) to hold onto from your Mexican background, what would it be?
- [ALL] 3 GENERATION PROGRESSION: In looking at all three generations we've been discussing, how would you describe your family progression or development through the generations (economic, social, education, occupation)?

Experiences of Race

- ROLE OF RACE: What kind of “role” does race play in your life? (Does it matter? If so, how?)
- SOCIAL I.D. POSITIVE: Have there been times when you see your social identity as *positive* (man/woman, class or race background)?
- SOCIAL I.D. NEGATIVE: Have there been times when you see your social identity as *negative* (man/woman, class or race background)?
- GENDER: Do you feel that your being a MAN/WOMAN makes a difference to your experience?
- CLASS: The literature on Mexican Americans says that economic status plays a part in how they are received or treated in a country. From your perspective and experience, does this seem to be true?
- TWO WORLDS: Some Mexican Americans or other minority groups say they feel like they are in-between two worlds—a Mexican American world and a White world. What is your feeling or experience on this?
- RELA. TO DOMINANT: How would you describe your relationship to “dominant” or “mainstream” U.S. culture?
- ACCESS/BARRERED: Do you suspect that your race (or nationality) has helped you gain access to or, oppositely, barred you from a career opportunity or an area of social life you wanted to enter?
- DISCRIMINATION: Have you ever encountered discrimination?
 - What happened and how did you react?
 - *Did this affect how you saw yourself?*
- ENJOY: What are some of the things you enjoy about being of Mexican heritage?
- FRUSTRATING: What are some of the things you find frustrating or dislike about being of Mexican heritage?
- SPANISH: What is your Spanish language ability? How important is Spanish to you?
- IF NOT FLUENT: How do you feel about having limited Spanish ability?

Family Variety

- COMPARE 3 GEN. RACIAL IDENTITY: What do you view as similar or different between yourself and the two other generations of your family in terms of racial identity?
- COMPARE 3 GEN. RACIAL EXPERIENCES: What do you view as similar or different between yourself and the two other generations of your family in terms of racial experiences?

- [IF SIBLINGS AT GEN3] **GEN1&2:** What are some key similarities or differences you see among your (grand)children regarding their experience of race?
- [IF SIBLINGS AT GEN3] **GEN3:** In your view, how do your siblings racially identify?
 - How has race played a role, in your view, in your brother's/sister's life?
 - Are there key similarities or differences you see between your experience and your sibling's experience?

Marriage

- IF MARRIED: What is the racial/ethnic background of your spouse?
- [ALL] How important or unimportant to you is it to have your spouse be of a similar racial/ethnic background as yourself? Why?
- IF MARRIED: How has your affiliation to Mexican culture changed since marriage?
- [ALL] As you advise(d) (think about advising) your child(ren) in choosing a marriage partner, how important or unimportant would you say it is for a spouse to be of a similar racial/ethnic background?

Conclusion

Future

- PRESERVED: What about your culture or experience do you most want to see preserved and transmitted to next generation?
- CHANGED: What about your culture or experience do you most want to see changed in the next generation?

Wrap-Up

- Apart from what we have already covered, are there other cultural experiences that are important to you or have significantly impacted your life?
- Would you like to add to or clarify anything we have discussed thus far?
- Is there anything I did not ask but that I should have?

Ask for introduction to other family members

Ask for referrals to other 3-generation families

APPENDIX B
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

Name: _____

Age: _____

Sex/Gender: _____

Occupation: _____

Highest Education Level (circle one): Grade School Junior High High School/GED

Some College 4-year College Degree Master's Degree Doctoral Degree

Your Race/Ethnicity: _____

Marital Status: Single/Never married Married Re-Married Divorced/Separated

If "Married," years of marriage: _____

If "Married," spouse's race/ethnicity: _____

Mother's occupation: _____

Father's occupation: _____

Were you born in the United States? YES NO

If NO, years in the U.S.: _____

If NO, nation of birth: _____

Was your mother born in the U.S.? YES NO

If NO, years in the U.S.: _____ If NO, nation of birth: _____

Was your father born in the U.S.? YES NO

If NO, years in the U.S.: _____ If NO, nation of birth: _____

Years you have lived in California: _____ State of residence before CA: _____

Household Income Bracket: under \$25,000 \$25,000-\$45,000 \$45,000-\$65,000

\$65,000-\$90,000 \$90,000-\$120,000 \$120,000-150,000 \$150,000-\$200,000 \$200,000-

\$250,000 \$250,000-\$400,000 \$400,000+

Individual Income Bracket: under \$20,000 \$20,000-\$40,000 \$40,000-\$60,000

\$60,000-\$80,000 \$80,000-\$100,000 \$100,000-\$150,000 \$150,000-\$200,000 \$200,000+

Languages you speak: English: Fluent Conversational Less-than-conversational

Spanish: Fluent Conversational Less-than-conversational

Other _____: Fluent Conversational Less-than-conversational

APPENDIX C

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (PSEUDONYMS)

Name	Gener- ation	Age	Sex	Education	Occupation	SES Category	English	Spanish	Years in CA
Tina Acevedo	2 nd	45	F	College	Registered Nurse	High	Fluent	Convo	All
Tom Acevedo	3 rd	17	M	High School	High School Student	High	Fluent	Less C	All
Rosa Avila	1 st	87	F	Jr. High or Less	Nurse	NR	None	Fluent	None (AZ)
Alfonzo Avila	2 nd	45	M	Some College	Cosmetologist	Upper Middle	Fluent	Fluent	6 of 45
Hector Avila	3 rd	23	M	Some College	Student/Security Guard	Upper Middle	Fluent	Convo	2 of 23
Benjamin Benavidas	2 nd	56	M	Master's	TV Producer/Director	Upper Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Caitlyn Benavidas	3 rd	24	F	College	University Administrator	Upper Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Ruby Castillo	2 nd	46	F	College	Production Company Owner	High	Fluent	Fluent	All
Dillon Castillo	3 rd	17	M	High School	High School Student	High	Fluent	Fluent	All
Ishmael (Milo) Contreras	2 nd	59	M	Doctoral Degree	Lawyer	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Renata Contreras	3 rd	25	F	College	Legal Assistant	Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Sergio Diaz	2 nd	47	M	High School	Mechanic/Auto shop owner	Middle	Fluent	Less C	All
Samantha Diaz	3 rd	25	F	College	Civil Litigation Clerk	High	Fluent	Less C	All
Luna Dos Santos	2 nd	59	F	Master's	University Administrator	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Carmina Dos Santos	3 rd	28	M	College	Student/Social worker	Lower	Fluent	Convo	26 of 28
Auscencio (Ceño) Dos Santos	3 rd	30	F	Master's	Graduate Student	Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Emilia Fuentes	2 nd	55	F	Master's	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	High	Fluent	Convo	All
Marisol Fuentes	3 rd	21	F	Some College	Student (college)	Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Constantina Guzman	1 st	82	F	Jr. High or Less	Flower Nursery/Housecleaner	Middle	None	Fluent	43 of 82

Name	Generation	Age	Sex	Education	Occupation	SES Category	English	Spanish	Years in CA
Gloria Guzman	2 nd	47	F	Jr. High or Less	Receptionist	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	43 of 47
Veronica Guzman	3 rd	19	F	High School	Student	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Monica Hernandez	2 nd	38	F	Some College	City Parks & Recreation	Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Ruth Jimenez	2 nd	64	F	Some College	Retired (Secretary)	Middle	Fluent	Convo	50 of 64
Michael Jimenez	3 rd	38	M	College	Architect	High	Fluent	Less C	37 of 38
Juan Lopez	1 st	84	M	Jr. High or Less	Farmer & Maintenance	Lower	Fluent	Fluent	83 of 84
Marcus Lopez	2 nd	57	M	College	Retired (manufacturing supervisor)	High	Fluent	Less C	All
Antonio Lopez	3 rd	35	M	GED	Police Officer	Middle	Fluent	Convo	28 of 35
Beatrice Madrigal	2 nd	60	F	Some College	Campus Monitor	Lower	English	Convo	All
Reyna Madrigal	3 rd	35	F	College	Educator	Middle	Fluent	Less C	All
Celia Medina	2 nd	52	F	Some College	Business Owner	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Manny Medina	3 rd	17	M	High School	Student	Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Adele Mendoza	2 nd	62	F	Some College	Health Assistant	Upper Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Ruben Mendoza	2 nd	65	M	High School	Retired	Upper Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Tyler Mendoza	3 rd	41	M	Master's	Counselor	NR	Fluent	Convo	All
Lee Morelos	2 nd	66	M	Some College	Business Executive	Upper Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Lance Morelos	3 rd	45	M	College	Restaurant Owner	Upper Middle	Fluent	Less C	All
Timothy Ponce	2 nd	62	M	Master's	High School Principal	High	Fluent	Fluent	55 of 62
Gabriel Ponce	3 rd	36	M	College	Sales	High	Fluent	Less C	All
Guillermo Ramirez	2 nd	73	M	Doctoral Degree	Attorney	High	Fluent	Fluent	All
Pierre-Mecatl Ramirez	3 rd	29	M	Master's	Law Student/Legal Advocate	Upper Middle	Fluent	Less C	All
Juan Ramos	1 st	84	M	Jr. High or Less	Agriculture & Construction	Middle	None	Fluent	55 of 84
Moises Ramos	3 rd	28	M	Master's	Counselor	Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Maria Montes (Rosenberg)	1 st	65	F	Jr. High/Less	Retired (packing house; small business owner)	NR	Fluent	Fluent	61 of 65
Tamara Rosenberg	2 nd	47	F	College	Architect	High	Fluent	Fluent	All

Name	Generation	Age	Sex	Education	Occupation	SES Category	English	Spanish	Years in CA
Jillian Rosenberg	3 rd	17	M	High School	Student	High	Fluent	Less C	All
Andrew Rosenberg	3 rd	20	F	Some College	Student	High	Fluent	Less C	All
Marcel Ruiz	2 nd	65	M	Some College	Architect	High	Fluent	Fluent	All
Amalia Ruiz	3 rd	34	F	College	Architect	High	Fluent	Less C	All
Albert Schultz	2 nd	65	M	Master's	School administrator	High	Fluent	Fluent	60 of 65
Rex Schultz	3 rd	32	M	College	Auctioneer/ Auto Dealer	NR	Fluent	Less C	21 of 32
Yolanda Segura	2 nd	48	F	Some College	Housewife	High	Fluent	Fluent	All
Davina Segura	3 rd	22	F	College	Teacher	High	Fluent	Convo	All
Raymond Talavera	2 nd	51	M	College	Sales	Upper Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Cristina Talavera	3 rd	30	F	College	Chef	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Mercedes Torres	1 st	88	F	Jr. High or Less	Retired (Cannery)	Middle	None	Fluent	66 of 88
Juana Torres	2 nd	64	M	Some College	Wastewater Collections	Upper Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Harry Torres	2 nd	65	F	Some College	Retired	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Ricardo (Rick) Torres	3 rd	21	M	Some College	Student	Lower	Fluent	Convo	All
Rafael Treviño	2 nd	59	M	Some College	Community Health Organization	Upper Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Araceli Treviño	3 rd	28	F	Some College	Community Health Organization	Middle	Fluent	Convo	All
Ramona Vargas	1 st	77	F	Jr. High or Less	Cannery, Packing house, Housekeeping	Lower	Convo	Fluent	52 of 77
Elena Vargas	2 nd	48	F	GED	Nutrition Educator	High	Fluent	Convo	All
Erica Vargas	3 rd	31	F	Some College	Operations Manager	Middle	Fluent	Less C	All
Norma Vasconcelos	1 st	65	F	Jr. High or Less	Restaurant Owner	NR	Less	Fluent	43 of 65
Gustavo Vasconcelos	2 nd /3 rd	47	M	College	Restaurant Owner	Middle	Fluent	Fluent	All
Paul Zagada	2 nd	62	M	Doctoral Degree	Governmental Affairs Consultant	High	Fluent	Convo	All
Daniel Zagada	3 rd	28	M	Doctoral Degree	Law student	Lower	Fluent	Less C	25 of 28

	INCOME BREAKDOWN KEY	
	Household:	Individual:
LOWER	UNDER \$25,000	UNDER \$20,000
MIDDLE	\$25,000-\$90,000	\$20,000-\$60,000
UPPER MIDDLE	\$90,000-\$120,000	\$60,000-\$80,000
HIGH	\$120,000+	\$80,000+

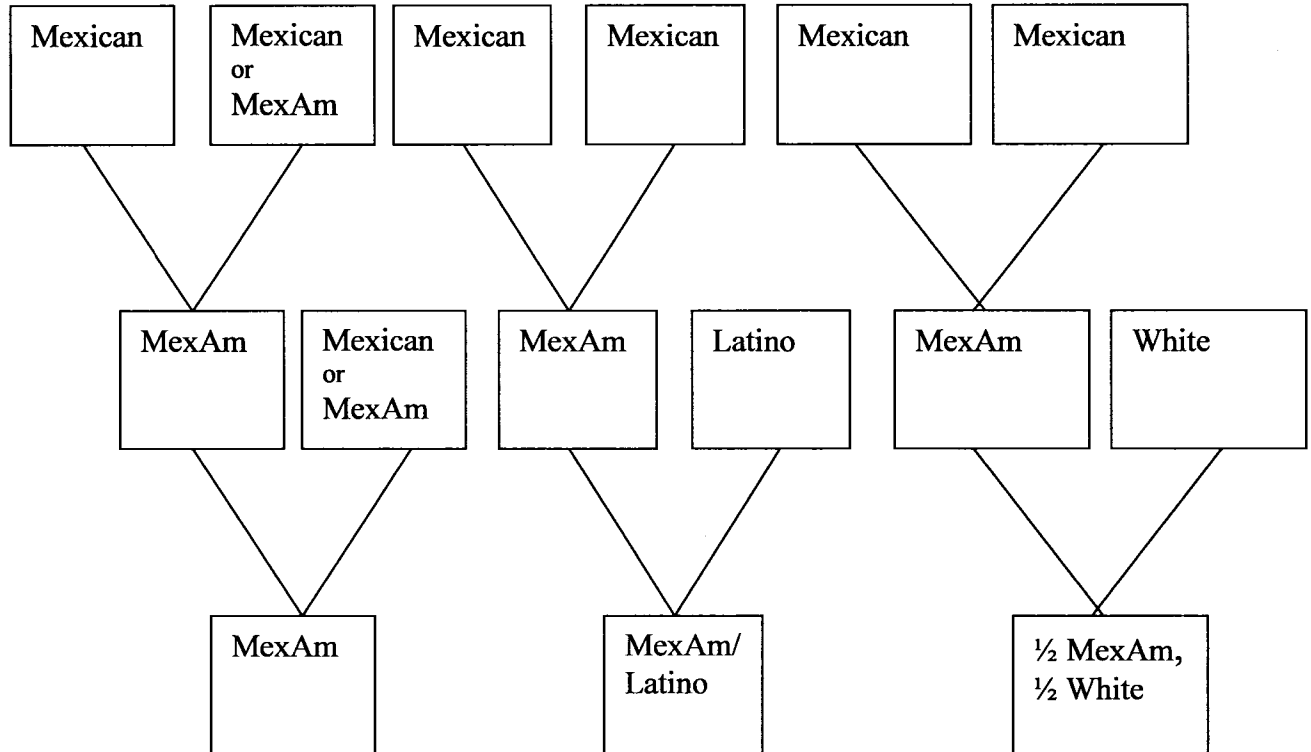
Abbreviations Key:

NR=Not Reported

Convo=Conversational

Less C=Less Than Conversational

APPENDIX D
FAMILY TREES: GENERATIONS 1, 2, AND 3



19 Families

Acevedo, Avila, Benavidas,
 Diaz, Dos Santos, Fuentes,
 Ramos, Ruiz, Schultz,
 Talavera, Torres, Madrigal,
 Medina, Mendoza, Morelos,
 Treviño, Vargas,
 Vasconcelos, Zagada

6 Families

Castillo, Guzman, Hernandez,
 Jimenez, Lopez, Segura

4 Families

Contreras, Ponce,
 Ramirez, Rosenberg

Note: “Latino” here refers ethnicities that are not Mexican or Mexican American.
 “White” here refers to non-Hispanic Whites.

APPENDIX E
MARITAL PATTERNS
BY THINNED ATTACHMENT / CULTURAL MAINTENANCE CATEGORIES*

Gen.	Respondent	TA/CM	Race of Spouse**	Marital Status
1	Mercedes Torres	CM	Mexican	Widowed
1	Juan Ramos	CM	Mexican	Married (2 nd)
1	Juan Lopez	CM	Mexican	Widowed
1	Constantina Guzman	CM	Mexican	Divorced/Sep.
1	Norma Vasconcelos	CM	Mexican	Widowed
2	Benjamin Benavidas	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Raymond Talavera	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Luna Dos Santos	CM	Mexican	Widowed
2	Tina Acevedo	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Adele Mendoza	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Ruben Mendoza	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Harry Torres	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Lee Morelos	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Beatrice Madrigal	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Emilia Fuentes	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Juana Torres	CM	Mexican	Widowed
2	Celia Medina	CM	Mexican	Married
2	Ruby Castillo	CM	Latino [Nicaraguan]	Married
2	Yolanda Segura	CM	Latino [Puerto Rican]	Married
2	Monica Hernandez	CM	Latino	Married
2	Marcus Lopez	CM	Latino	Married (2 nd)
2	Gloria Guzman	CM	Latino	Married
2	Guillermo Ramirez	CM	[French]	Divorced
3	Lance Morelos	CM	[Mexican]	Divorced
3	Reyna Madrigal	CM	Mexican	Married
3	Gustavo Vasconcelos	CM	Mexican	Married
3	Tyler Mendoza	CM	White	Married
3	Pierre-Mecatl Ramirez	CM	White	Married
3	Carmina Dos Santos	CM	White	Married
3	Antonio Lopez	CM	N/A	Divorced
1	Ramona Vargas	TA	Mexican	Widowed
1	Maria Montes (Rosenberg)	TA	Mexican	Married (2 nd)
1	Rosa Avila	TA	Mexican	Widowed
2	Paul Zagada	TA	Mexican	Married

2	Sergio Diaz	TA	Mexican	Married
2	Alfonzo Avila	TA	[Mexican]	Divorced
2	Marcel Ruiz	TA	Mexican	Married (3 rd)
2	Albert Schultz	TA	Mexican	Married
2	Rafael Trevino	TA	Mexican	Married
2	Rachel Jimenez	TA	Latino [Salvadorean]	Married
2	Tamara (Montes) Rosenberg	TA	White	Married
2	Timothy Ponce	TA	White [French Canadian]	Married
2	Ishmael Contreras	TA	White	Mexican
2	Elena Vargas	TA	N/A	Divorced
3	Michael Jimenez	TA	White	Married

*I coded each family as “cultural maintenance” [CM] or “thinned attachment” [TA] based on the *trajectory* of the family, noting specifically the leanings of the second and third generations. Thus, while *all* first generation individuals married fellow Mexican or Mexican Americans I considered the cultural leanings of successive generations when categorizing the families.

** I included “Chicana” and “Mexican American” in the “Mexican” category, intending to capture people "of Mexican descent." Similarly, I collapsed the categories of “Hispanic,” “Latin American” and “Latino” into “Latino.”

Unmarried

- Twenty-two third [CM] generation men and women were unmarried and thus not included in this chart. The dating preference, by in large, was to date within one’s own racial/ethnic group for cultural maintenance individuals. Thinned attachment individuals, on the other hand, expressed little interest in dating inside their racial/ethnic group, sometimes desiring to date exclusively outside of it.

APPENDIX F
FIRST GENERATION IMMIGRANTS' & SPOUSES' OCCUPATIONS

Family Surname	Male Birth Country*	Male Occupation	Female Birth Country*	Female Occupation
Ruiz	Mexico	Blue Collar (Gardener)	U.S.	Housewife
Ponce	Mexico	Farm Worker	U.S.	Farm Worker
Diaz	Mexico	Blue Collar (Mechanic)	U.S.	Housewife
Segura	Mexico	Blue Collar	Mexico	Blue Collar
Rosenberg	Mexico	Farm Worker & Packing House	Mexico	Farm Worker
Mendoza	Mexico	Railroad Worker	U.S.	Housewife
Ramos	Mexico	Farm Worker	NR	NR
Talavera	U.S.	Blue Collar (Warehouse)	Mexico	Maid
Torres	Mexico	Railroad Worker	Mexico	Blue Collar (Cannery)
Jimenez	Mexico	Farm Worker	Mexico	Farm Worker
Lopez	Mexico	Farm Worker	Mexico	Farm Worker
Guzman	Mexico	NR	Mexico	Maid
Vargas	Mexico	Blue Collar (Gardener)	Mexico	Maid
Vasconcelos	U.S.	Restaurant Owner	Mexico	Restaurant Owner
Benavidas	U.S.	Blue Collar (Electrician)	Mexico	Housewife
Avila	U.S.	Blue Collar (Postal Worker)	Mexico	Housewife
Medina	Mexico	Blue Collar (Asphalt Layer)	Mexico	Housewife
Morelos	Mexico	Blue Collar (Upholsterer)	Mexico	Housewife
Hernandez	Mexico	Blue Collar (Carpentry)	Mexico	Housewife
Castillo	U.S.	Security Guard	Mexico	Housewife
Acevedo	Mexico	Information Technology	Mexico	Nurse
Madrigal	Mexico	Blue Collar (Trucker)	U.S.	Blue Collar
Dos Santos	Mexico	Farm Owner	Mexico	Housewife
Trevino	Mexico	Blue Collar (Gardener)	U.S.	Clerk
Fuentes	U.S.	Blue Collar (Construction)	Mexico	Housewife
Schultz	Mexico	Business Owner	Mexico	Retail
Zagada	U.S.	Blue Collar	Mexico	Housewife
Ramirez	Mexico	Blue Collar (Welder)	Mexico	Housewife
Contreras	Mexico	Farm Worker	U.S.	Housewife

*First generation immigrant or his/her spouse/partner.

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