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NEGOTIATING INTERSECTING  
CULTURAL IDENTITIES, DIALECTICAL  
TENSIONS, AND STATUS RELATIONSHIPS:  
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS IN  
TWO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN  
THE SOUTHWEST

Yea-Wen Chen

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**NEGOTIATING INTERSECTING CULTURAL IDENTITIES,  
DIALECTICAL TENSIONS, AND STATUS RELATIONSHIPS  
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS IN TWO NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST**

**BY**

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B.A., English, National Taiwan Normal University, 2000  
M.A., Communication Studies, University of North Texas, 2006

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
Communication**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**August, 2010**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to individuals, groups, and organizations committed to creating *social change* and promoting *social justice*!

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Finally, I must pay tribute to my family and my partner for their unconditional love and support. Masato, thanks for keeping me grounded. Mom and Dad, thanks for your words of encouragement that give me the strength I need to keep going in trying and challenging times!

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**ABSTRACT**

This project addresses an important, but often overlooked, phenomenon of communication in intercultural relationships in the context of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) with attention to the role of intersecting cultural identity positions and status relationships. Specifically, I examined discourses of how members across three status positions in two social justice-oriented NPOs, namely Center of Peace for Asians and Social Enterprise of Hispanic Women, constructed the identity of the NPO and negotiated their intersecting cultural identities, relational dialectics, and status hierarchies. Also, I interrogated the ideological implications of discourses and the reproduction of broader social order. Four research questions were posed to guide my research.

I relied on theoretical and conceptual foundations of cultural identities, intersecting standpoints, and relational dialectics to answer my research questions. I employed a method of critical discourse analysis that is consistent with an integrated

critical/interpretive theoretical perspective. My data collection was guided by a case study approach that is commonly employed in researching NPOs. The two NPOs were selected based on their uniqueness and similarities as social justice-oriented NPOs. I collected three forms of data, among which interview discourses were the primary source of data.

Findings in this study document ways in which intersecting cultural identity positions and status relationship negotiation affected the work of the two NPOs. Though not explicit in the interview discourses or organizational materials, the work of the NPOs, trying to enable women (and men) to succeed in the face of wider social systems, functioned implicitly to reproduce classism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. Overall, this study argues that cultural identities and relationships are best understood as contextually driven and having political implications, because they reflect status positions and have implications for the work of organizations and the lives of the marginalized clients/employees.

In particular, underlying the reproduction of race-, class-, education-based privilege and higher status for staff and board members in both NPOs seems to be a unique form of liberalism ideology that I term *benevolent liberalism*. This form of liberalism is benevolent as rooted in a strong sense of moral obligation prevalent in the nonprofit sector to help people in need. Also, the findings in this study also suggest the critical role that “middle-range actors,” who understand both the social worlds above and below, can play as *bridges* to name differences and bring up critical issues. Finally, I synthesize a list of principles that appear central to intercultural relationship processes in the two NPOs in this study.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Communication is a practical discipline...As a practical discipline, our essential purpose is to cultivate communicative praxis, or practical art, through critical studies. All of our work does, or should, pursue that purpose” (1989, pp. 97-98).

As Robert Craig (1989) compellingly argues, the overarching mission of communication scholarship is, or should be, to cultivate in the general society a process of thinking and acting about communicative issues that is sophisticated, relevant, engaged, and potentially useful and/or transformative. Nearly two decades later, Craig (2007) contends that cultivating theoretical, research-driven, and critically informed ways of talking about communication programs that are more sophisticated and useful might be “our discipline’s Mission Impossible” (p. 103). Craig’s statements suggest that the communication discipline is still limited in its systematic inquiry of and theorizing about communication problems for the purpose of promoting socially relevant practices. In an issue forum introduction, Craig (2007) inquires: “How should we theorize communication problems” (p. 103)? In the Foreword to Swartz’s (2008) book on transformative communicative studies, Lawrence Frey asks whether communication scholars are “part of the problem of social injustice or part of its solution” (p. ix). Attempting to contribute to this larger conversation regarding communication praxis for a just world, or what others like Kevin Barge and George Cheney call “engaged scholarship,”<sup>1</sup> I examine and interrogate in this dissertation intercultural praxis as situated in the context of relating across cultural differences for the overarching goal of promoting socially just intercultural relationships. As Yep (Collier, Hegde, Lee, Nakayama, & Yep,

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<sup>1</sup> Engaged scholarship is scholarship that intends to bridge theory and practice through the process of collaborative engagement between academic scholars and community practitioners by immersing research in the lives of working groups and organizations and using communication theory and research to enhance the lives of community members (Barge, Simpson, & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008).



2002) puts it, “to strive for social justice, we must closely examine, analyze, and challenge social oppressions based on differences” (p. 247).

### **Problem Statement**

The nonprofit sector is an essential yet one of the least understood components of the U.S. society (Salamon, 2002). In 1993, the U.S. nonprofit sector embraced approximately 1.4 million organizations with operating expenditures of approximately \$500 billion (Salamon, 1997); in 2000, it employed over 8 million workers and recruited 80 million volunteers (King, 2000, as cited in Barge & Hackett, 2003). The increasing presence of the nonprofit sector and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in the United States has garnered growing interests from both practitioners and academics, such as political scientists, sociologists, economists, and business professors (Dempsey, 2009; DiMaggio & Anheir, 1990; Joseph, 2002; Salamon, 1997; e.g., Zimmer, 1999). Yet communication scholars have been slow to develop systematic approaches to examine the roles, functions, and influences of communication in this increasingly influential context of the U.S. American lives. Considering that part of the nonprofit sector’s vitality and struggle comes from the intimacy that nonprofits build with the people they serve (Dym & Hutson, 2005), there is a need for communication scholars to examine intercultural relationships in NPOs, particularly relationships between individuals with divergent yet intersecting cultural identities.

I consider it an urgent need for intercultural communication scholars to not only *describe* but also *interrogate* how intercultural relating is enabled, constrained, and (re)produced as it is implicated in the intricate politics of economic structures, social institutions, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, I situate this dissertation in the

examination of a critical yet understudied social phenomenon—*how* intersecting cultural identities as locations of being, speaking, and enacting intercultural relationships facilitate or hinder the work of social justice-oriented NPOs.

Paradoxically, in the U.S. public and political context, relating across lines of cultural difference presents both glimmers of hope and ongoing challenges. As exemplified in two contrasting events, the United States witnessed both, on November 4, 2008, the unprecedented election of the first Black President, Barack Obama, in a White-majority country, and, on April 24, 2010, the passage of Senate Bill 1070 in Arizona that aims to identify, prosecute, and deport undocumented immigrants. Changing demographics<sup>2</sup> and record rates of migration<sup>3</sup> contribute to calling increased political attention to cultural differences, because of perceived links between race, ethnicity, and nationality with cultural differences. Also, relationships in which individuals regard themselves as culturally different are often perceived to be more problematic, conflicted, and challenging than those in which individuals regard themselves as culturally similar. This is partly due to the roles of structural contexts, histories, unequal status positioning, and unbalanced power relations as well as tensions, struggles, dialectics, and issues both present and absent in intracultural relationships (e.g., L. Chen, 2002; Collier, 2003a; Collier et al., 2002; Gudykunst, 1985; P.-W. Lee, 2006). Despite the growing acknowledgement of relationships as being, to some degree, intercultural, little is known about *what* hinders or facilitates the specific ways in which group members develop

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the US Census Bureau projects and estimates that the non-Hispanic, single-race whites will comprise only 46 percentage of the total population in 2050, down from 66 percent in 2008 (Bernstein & Edwards, 2008). In 2050, it is projected that approximately 30% of the US total population will be Hispanic, 15% black, 9.2% Asian, and 2% American Indians and Alaska Natives.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, the International Organization for Migration reports that, in 2007, there were 26 million internally displaced persons in at least 52 countries as a result of conflict compared to 24.5 million in 52 countries in 2006.

sustainable intercultural relationships. Also, communication scholars have paid little attention to how group members talk about, conceptualize, and experience their intercultural relationships.

### **Gaps in Previous Research**

Though communication can be theorized as “a process of relating” as Condit proffers (2006, p. 3), there are limited studies on communication in intercultural relationships such as intercultural marriage, dating, friendship, alliances, and workplace relationships with a centralized focus on the process and context of communication. Specifically, Ling Chen (2002) argues that “research on intercultural relationship communication is still in its infancy” (p. 241) and Morgan and Arasaratnam (2003) concur that “intercultural friendship is an area of research that is still in its early stages (p. 176).” In particular, there is no study, that I am aware of, that examines the role of communication in intercultural relating in the context of NPOs.

Despite its centrality in the U.S. American society, the nonprofit sector is one of the least understood (Salamon, 2002). Besides a body of research examining aspects and principles of “nonprofit management” (e.g., Edwards & Yankey, 2006; McNabb, 2008; Worth, 2009), not much is known about many of the complexities and contradictions undergirding the nonprofit sector. For instance, O’Neill (1994) synthesizes that, though the nonprofit sector is gendered female, women continue to be excluded from power and influence in nonprofits. Clarke (2001) argues that the nonprofit sector in the United States is both gendered and racialized with unbalanced and unrepresentative employment at the national level. Though the nonprofit sector is a rich site for investigating communication processes, communication scholars in general have been relatively silent in conversations

regarding the nonprofit sector. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining discourses of nonprofit intercultural relationships.

There are several meta-theoretical approaches that examine communication in intercultural relationships. The dominant and most frequent approach to communication in intercultural relationships is generally (post-)positivist in orientation as exemplified by Cahn's (1984) cross-cultural study on friendship formation and mate selection between the United States and Japan, and Gudykunst's (1985) seminal study on a comparison of close intracultural and intercultural friendships. Gudykunst also advocates for "extending findings and theorizing from interpersonal (intracultural) communication to intercultural settings" (1985, p. 270). This approach tends to treat culture and communication as measurable variables and focuses on identifying cultural or communicative barriers that can affect relationship quality. Also, Chen (2002) argues that, whether the focus is on cross-cultural variability, relationship development, or communication processes in (post)positivist approaches, researchers tend to assume that individuals' awareness of cultural differences in most personal relationships moves from the intercultural level to the interpersonal level progressively, and that individuals decrease their awareness and judgments of cultural differences as their relationships develop and stabilize (e.g., L. Chen, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1991).

As Ono (1998) critiques, these approaches are problematic in oversimplifying or reducing culture to a measurable variable and in the tendency to equate culture with nation or nation-state alone. Also, they are limited in their attention to links between context, group status positioning, and communication, and also limited in examining how communication praxis may transform or promote equitable intercultural relationships.

A “critical” turn in intercultural communication scholarship includes a growing body of research approaches to culture and communication in intercultural relationships with greater reflexivity<sup>4</sup> and sensitivity to issues of praxis, power (differentials), context/contextualization, ideology, history, voice or agency, and social justice (e.g., Carrillo Rowe, 2008; Collier, 2002; Collier et al., 2002; Martin & Flores, 1998; Sorrells & Nakagawa, 2008). Responding to the critiques of essentialized, reductionist, and oversimplification of cultural differences in cross-cultural research, scholars using these approaches advocate a careful re-consideration and re-conceptualization of culture to embrace “the derivatives of experiences,” multiplicity of positions and identities, and contextual factors such as historical positioning, problematic nationalism, and globalization (e.g., Avruch, 1998, p. 17; Chuang, 2003; Martin & Flores, 1998; Shome & Hegde, 2002). Understanding intercultural relationships at “the interface between intimacy and institutionality” (Carrillo Rowe, 2008, p. 2), the more critically oriented approach, also used in this dissertation, seeks to describe, interpret, and critique the politics of status, limitations, and boundaries of intercultural relating in the hope of promoting equitable and just intercultural relationships. This approach to intercultural relationships has the strength of illuminating how structural and interpersonal forces both enable and constrain communication praxis as situated in intercultural relating in this paradoxical world featuring both the glimmers of hope and “the clash of civilizations” (Huntington, 1996).

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<sup>4</sup> Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (as cited in Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000) defines reflexivity as a commitment to self-critique that aims to uncover the social roots of one’s political and scientific dispositions, one’s investments in the field, and one’s theoretical choices. According to Bourdieu, such commitment to self-critique and self-examination is the foundation of a socially responsible theory of knowledge.

Communication in intercultural relationships, though understudied, is important to NPOs. Nonprofit organizations, often led and funded by members of the dominant groups, functions to give voices to and serve minority groups whose needs are not fully met or unmet within government-funded programs such as immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals (e.g., Hung, 2007; Smith, 2005; Worth, 2009). The increasing racial and ethnic diversity and demographic shifts in the United States demand that NPOs work with and relate to an increasingly diverse workforce and serve diverse clients (Parish, Ellison, & Parish, 2006). At the same time, NPOs need to build relationships with funders who might not live or understand the experiences of the minority groups served (Shaw & Allen, 2006). Hence, relating across differences matters for NPOs to obtain funding, retain volunteers, and truly empower the people they serve. Dym and Huston (2005) even argue that leadership in the NPOs can be characterized by a set of relationships that they term “leadership as relationship” (p. 142). Despite the importance of relationship negotiation for NPOs, no scholarship that I am aware of has examined how relating across lines of cultural difference might hinder or facilitate the work of NPOs.

Intersecting cultural identities are also important to NPOs. Many of the minority groups served by NPOs confront problems on multiple fronts based on their intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, class, education, and sex and gender. For example, in Gallegos and O’Neill’s (Gallegos & O’Neill, 1991) overview of NPOs serving Hispanic communities in the United States, they highlight not only the intersection between religion and Hispanic nonprofits, but also the intersection between gender and the Hispanic nonprofits. Religion matters for Hispanic nonprofits partly due to many

Hispanics' historical religious affiliation with Catholicism, whereas gender issues are a critical challenge because Hispanic nonprofits have been a largely male-dominated enterprise. However, little is known about how intersecting cultural identities of clients or of staff hinder or facilitate the work of NPOs.

Overall, the importance and paucity of studies on intersecting cultural identities in intercultural relationships within NPOs underscore a need to understand how individuals working in NPOs talk about and experience their intercultural relationships. Moreover, considering the important role that contextually contingent cultural identity negotiation plays in intercultural relationships (e.g., Collier, 2002; Imahori & Cupach, 2005; Jackson, 2002; P.-W. Lee, 2006), there is a need to examine how contextual structures enable and constrain the ways in which individuals working in social justice-oriented NPOs negotiate their intersecting cultural identities in intercultural relationships. Finally, this study also answers a need to understand how intercultural relationships facilitate or hinder the work of NPOs with social justice-oriented goals.

## **Background on Intercultural Relationships**

### ***Cultural Identity Negotiation***

One of the key issues in intercultural relationships relevant in the nonprofit sector is cultural identity negotiation. Collier (2002), Diggs and Clark (2002), and Lee (2006) collectively suggest that the construction, management, and/or negotiation of divergent identities are key to how intercultural actors come to form and develop intercultural relationships and alliances across cultures. Diggs and Clark (2002) emphasize the communicative negotiation of individual identities across racial boundaries and also the reliance on shared spirituality to negotiate divergent racial identities during difficult

discourses. Lee (2006) highlights the communicative negotiation of relational identities through a variety of communicative activities based on individual and conjoint interviews and argues that intercultural friends can and should ultimately construct a shared relational identity. Collier (2002) stresses the sometimes contradictory needs for simultaneously maintaining recognition of mutually satisfying relational identity and divergent cultural identities in intercultural friendship alliances. Informed by Simone de Beauvoir's theory of relational subjectivity, Stavro (2007) argues that identity is the basis for political agency and organizing in leftist feminist coalition building. Overall, all four studies described above endorse the important role of cultural identity negotiation in intercultural relationships such as friendships and alliances, but gaps are evident—how individuals in intercultural relationships navigate their intersecting cultural identities as they relate to each other across lines of differences, and how they navigate contextual forces, are largely unexplored.

Intersecting cultural identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and nationality, also play an important role in international and intercultural communication in organizations (B. J. Allen, Flores, & Orbe, 2007). Allen (2004) argues, in the workplace, increasing diversity in terms of a variety of personal and social identities engenders both theoretical and practical challenges for (organizational) communication scholars. Kirby's (2007) study on a national NPO working with Hmong refugees and communities in the United States highlights a contested negotiation of how the Hmong organization defined itself in relation to the dominant U.S. cultural norms. Abraham's (1995) study on six organizations working with South Asian women in the United States found it critical for those organizations to address the intersection of ethnicity and gender when dealing with



issues such as marital violence. All studies described above endorse the critical role of negotiating intersecting cultural identities in organizations. In particular, many NPOs in the United States serve minority groups with intersecting group identities such as race, sex, class migrant status, and educational levels (e.g., low-income Mexican immigrant women). When intersections of group identities are overlooked, problematics can occur that have implications for the work of NPOs such as misrepresenting, homogenizing, and oversimplifying the minority groups at the center of the NPOs' work. Overall, considering the increasingly diversified workforce in the United States as well as the limited communication studies on NPOs, more efforts are needed to understand the ways in which negotiating intersecting cultural identities have implications and consequences for the work of NPOs with social-justice goals.

If one agrees with Miller (2005) that a theory functions, or should function, to “provide an understanding or explanation of something observed in the social world” (p. 25), then there is a need for a more coherent theory of the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities that can advance our knowledge and inform the practice of negotiating cultural identities in these settings. Thus, one of the goals of this project is to consider how to advance theorizing about intersecting cultural identities. Moreover, Oetzel, Burtis, Sanchez, and Perez (2001) argue that future research on culturally diverse work groups should address the relation between cultural and contextual factors and their influence in communication and the function of communication to create inclusive and diverse groups. Oetzel et al.'s argument highlights the importance of contextual forces in understanding intersecting cultural identities in NPOs.

### *Dialectical Tensions and Intercultural Relationships*

The negotiation of intersecting cultural identities does not happen in a vacuum as autonomous actions performed by two independent actors uninfluenced by socioeconomic or geopolitical structures and cultural and relational constraints. People involved in relationships negotiate pairs of sometimes opposing contradictions, such as the tension between wanting to be treated as an individual and at the same time having one's group identities recognized and affirmed (Collier, as cited in Martin & Nakayama, 1999). Baxter (1988) defines the fluctuation of relationship contradictions or tensions as relational dialectics and identifies three primary dialectics in relating: autonomy-connection, predictability-novelty and openness-closedness.

Cultural identities are context-bound and intersect with contextual forces (Collier, 2005b). For example, in Collier's (2009) study of interview discourses with Palestinian, Israelis, and Palestinian/Israeli young women, dialectical tensions were evidenced in Palestinian/Israelis participants' discourses of negotiating their Palestinian and Israeli identities. Another example is, dependent upon organizational policies and norms, the intensity of claiming or avowing ethnic identities or sexual orientations can emerge in tensions between autonomy and connection. Thus, relational dialectics are also incorporated into my approach to examine cultural identity negotiation in intercultural relationships.

The utility of the dialectical perspective to this project is further supported by Martin and Nakayama's (1999) dialectical approach to studying intercultural interactions. Specifically, the two theorists offer six dialectics that appear to operate interdependently in intercultural interactions. Their dialectical approach recognizes that intercultural

communication includes dimensions that are: (a) cultural and individual, (b) personal and contextual, (c) based on cultural differences and similarities, (d) processes that are static and dynamic, (e) historical and contemporary, and (f) positions that are privileged and disadvantaged. Employing the dialectical approach as an entry point to explore and examine cultural identity negotiation in intercultural relationships, this project applies the two bodies of literature on relational dialectics and cultural identity negotiation.

Since relationships are inherently filled with contradictions or dialectical tensions, it is not surprising that Kauser (2007) concludes the estimated failure rate of alliances ranges from 30% to 70%, especially in international strategic alliances where cultural differences and inflexibility are potential sources of problems. Undoubtedly, how partners manage dialectical tensions is central to the development of intercultural relationships. In employing the dialectical approach to examine and explore cultural identity negotiation in this setting, I focus on cultural identity negotiation during moments of relational connections and disconnections. Consistent with LeBaron's (2003) conception of conflict as "difference that matters," such a focus enables me to explore individual notions of how and when different identities matter. Also, consistent with Baxter's (1990) argument that, among the three primary sets of relational dialectics, connection-autonomy is the primary contradiction present in all personal relationships, such a focus makes possible the examination of cultural identity negotiation as both enabled and constrained by the primary contradictions or tensions in relational development. Finally, identity and relationship *negotiation* in this study means both an enactment and an unfolding communication process, through which individuals navigate their histories, institutionally produced positions, economically driven conditions of

living as well as socially co-construct their relationships, group identities, and relative positions with each other.

### *Intercultural Communication in the Nonprofit Organizational Context*

The particularized context of social justice-oriented NPOs provides a rich, dynamic, and unique setting to explore how intercultural partners negotiate their divergent and intersecting cultural identities. I concur with Martin, Nakayama, and Flores (2002) that “context” is one of the four central components, or as they put it, “building blocks,” of intercultural communication along with culture, communication, and power. The context of NPOs is unique because of the particular ways in which nonprofits are constituted by economic, political, and institutional forces such as state policy and law, cultural norms, organizational resources, their particular constituencies, and ideologies surrounding their so-called “nonprofit-ness” (DiMaggio & Anheir, 1990). Studying the negotiation of cultural identities between intercultural partners in the specific context of NPOs has several benefits. The examination of how the negotiation of cultural identities is contextually enabled and constrained and impacts social justice work is useful because nonprofit sectors are central to the vitality and health of democratic societies (e.g., Clarke, 2001; Smith, 2005). Attention to specific nonprofits enables me to address practical implications for maintaining and sustaining their work as enabled and constrained by contextual factors.

Given the engaged examination of communication problems, I strive in this dissertation to describe, interpret, and critique how interviews and organizational documents reveal the ways in which individuals working in social justice-oriented NPOs negotiate their intersecting cultural identities.

I address cultural identity and intercultural relationship negotiation in the nonprofit context by concentrating on two social justice-oriented NPOs in the Southwestern region of the United States under the pseudonyms of Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) and Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW). Derived from Broome and colleagues' (2005) definition of activism,<sup>5</sup> social justice in this project is conceptualized as an engaged commitment to afford fair treatment, equitable opportunities, and human rights to individuals and groups whose lives are marginalized, oppressed, dominated by, or discriminated against in society. Accordingly, a social justice-oriented organization is one that is committed to promoting the rights of and affording fair treatment to any marginalized or oppressed groups or individuals such as low-income families, victims of domestic violence, immigrants, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgenders. Hence, the two NPOs that I focus on in this project are rendered social justice-oriented organizations for their commitment to creating opportunities and promoting well-being of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

There are several reasons why the two selected NPOs provide both unique and fruitful settings for this dissertation. Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) has a vision of serving the well-being of Asians and Asian Americans. Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW) has a vision of building intergenerational wealth for low-income women, and has had a Hispanic<sup>6</sup>-only employment record since its inception. Both

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<sup>5</sup> Broome, Carey, de la Garza, Martin and Morris (2005) define activism as “action that attempts to make a positive difference in situations where people’s lives are affected by oppression, domination, discrimination, racism, conflict, and other forms of cultural struggle due to differences in race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and other identity makers” (p. 146).

<sup>6</sup> In this project, I use the participant-driven term “Hispanic” to refer to the primary group of women served by Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women. I also understand that there are other available identifiers, including but not limited to Mexican/Mexicano, Mexican American, Spanish-American, Chicano/a, Hispano/a, and Latino/a. I am mindful of the differences in the variety of ethnic self-identifying labels and that the label “Hispanic” carries numerous meanings and ideological implications. I base this term on

organizations are similar in terms of (a) their status as NPOs with social-justice missions, (b) their female-dominated leadership structure, (c) their commitment to community outreach and involvement, and (d) their focus on issues confronting women such as poverty and domestic violence. At the same time, the two organizations are different in terms of (a) the age of the organization,<sup>7</sup> (b) national/ethnic identities of their clients, and (c) their missions. Situated in the U.S. Southwest, it is contextually specific to focus on a Hispanic-serving NPO and an Asian-serving NPO in a region where Hispanics are the minority-majority and Asian-Americans are defined as a “model minority” in the United States (e.g., Kawai, 2005; S. J. Lee, 1996). These organizations provide two unique cases to examine and understand how intercultural relationships are contextually enabled and constrained.

I also consider both NPOs broadly as *feminist organizations* that explicitly mobilize and organize women and the marginalized to achieve social change and promote social justice. Ferree (2006) defines *feminism* as “a goal, a target for social change, a purpose” (p.6) adopted by individuals of any sex or sexual orientation as well as by groups with any degree of institutionalization to challenge and change “norms and processes of gender construction and oppression that differentially advantage some women and men relative to others” (p. 7). Lynne Segal (1999) contends the most radical goal of *feminism* has yet to be realized: “a world which is a better place not just for some women, but for all women” (p.232). Neither of the two NPOs in this study labels itself as *feminist*, but my treatment of them as *feminist organizations* enables me to call attention

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participants’ preferences. The term Hispano/Hispanic is widely used in some parts of colonized territories in the U.S. Southwest such as New Mexico (Acuna, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women was founded in 1994, whereas Center of Peace for Asians was founded in 2006.

to systematic norms and processes of gender/race/class construction and oppression that differentially disadvantage some relative to others, especially women and people of color. This move is supported by Dales' argument that "Non-government women's groups are significant as sites of feminist engagement, because women organizing into groups—with or without explicit feminist identification—has several political effects" (p. 38).

### **Identities, Intercultural Relationships, and Nonprofit Organizations**

Conditioned by forces such as marketization, economic globalization, and social fragmentation, Salamon (1997), Wolch (1999), and Zimmer (1999) argue that the U.S. nonprofit sector faces crises of legitimacy, fiscal integrity, and organizational effectiveness. However, the nonprofit sector in the United States has seen tremendous growth since the category was officially created in 1980. Bernstein reports that, as of 2000, there are a total of 1.2 million tax-exempt nonprofit organizations (NPOs) registered with the Internal Revenue Service. The growing presence and significance of the nonprofit sector in the United States, coupled with the political, social, and economic crises facing NPOs, demand communication scholars to examine, analyze, and theorize the specific ways in which culture and communication are linked in this unique context.

In particular, there is a need to investigate from a communication perspective the specific ways in which intersecting cultural identities play out in the work of NPOs in the United States from a communication perspective. Scholars have identified several issues in how identity matters for NPOs. First, Salamon (1997) argues that part of the legitimacy crisis facing the U.S. nonprofit sector is rooted in the contradictions between what nonprofits must do for survival and what the public thinks they should do. However, there is limited understanding of how NPOs can successfully and/or strategically navigate

the intersecting forces and identities surrounding who they are, who they want to be, and who they are expected to be. Second, the issue of social fragmentation due to rapid social change and global migration also influence how NPOs define their constituencies and subsequently develop their political identities in order to create communities of interest (e.g., Clarke, 2001; Wolch, 1999). Clarke contends that the nonprofit sector in the United States is both gendered and racialized with unbalanced and unrepresentative employment at the national level. However, there is a dearth of empirical studies on how NPOs negotiate the intersections of class, race, ethnicity, and gender implicated in their work, goals, and missions. Third, Wolch (1999) argues that identity politics challenges notions of citizenship, but little is known about how NPOs promote democratic or civilized political identities in their work.

As the negotiation of identities is always relational and/or intersubjective, it is necessary to situate my investigation of how NPOs navigate the terrain of intersecting cultural identities in relationships. On the other hand, intercultural communication scholarship is needed to expand the investigation of intercultural relationships in the nonprofit sector. Overall, the limited understanding of how intercultural relationships develop, change, function, and terminate in the context of NPOs warrants further study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The overarching goals, therefore, of this project are three-fold. First, the epistemological goal is to gain knowledge of both (a) *how* individuals discursively negotiate their cultural identities and define intercultural relationships in the nonprofit sector, and (b) *how* cultural identity negotiation and intercultural relationships are contextually constructed, enabled, and constrained in interviews and organizational



documents. The focus on cultural identity negotiation in intercultural relationships provides a critical entry point to gain new knowledge of the forces, tensions, issues, and transformative spaces confronting intercultural relationships. Knowledge of the impact of social, cultural, ideological, and institutional forces that are implicated in interviews and organizational texts is also important in assisting subsequent efforts to promote fair and equitable intercultural relationships.

A second goal is to re-theorize intercultural relationships. The focus on cultural identities provides the theoretical space to broaden and expand existing theorizing based on cultural identity theory (Collier, 1998, 2005b; Collier & Thomas, 1988). This focus creates the theoretical space for re-examining identity and cultural identity negotiation in a particular set of case studies.

Third, the pragmatic goal is to study NPOs that have implications for understanding and advocating socially responsible and humanitarian intercultural relationships. At the most basic, this dissertation will produce, based on findings of this study, a list of principles that appear central to effective intercultural relationships. At the next level, the findings may result in potential models or learnings that NPOs can utilize for their own intercultural relationships and social justice work.

Within the three overarching goals of knowledge acquisition, theorizing, and application, this study has several specific objectives. Situated in the particularized context of cultural identity and relationship negotiation in two social justice-oriented NPOs, this study aims to first understand how the work and identity of each NPO are discursively constructed across status positions. As the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities brings together the personal, the political, the cultural, and the contextual, this

study also seeks to examine what discourses demonstrate with regard to the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities as well as the negotiation of status relationships as enabled and constrained by dialectical tensions. Finally, to promote socially just nonprofit intercultural relationships, this study strives to interrogate what discourses about organizational productivity and group relations produce and/or accomplish ideologically.

### **Summary of Significance of the Study**

The focus on the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities during moments of connection and disconnection in intercultural relationship negotiation in social justice-oriented NPOs is important for several reasons. First, such a focus offers a situated site to explore “identity in communication and culture” at the interface of the relational, social, contextual, and political (Tanno & Gonzalez, 1998). Also, it answers Barge and Hackett’s (2003) call for making a fuller account of the centrality of communication in theorizing about the complex intersection of divergent identities by attending to the role of communication. It gives attention to the construction and production of organizational identities in two specific cases. Thus, this study has the potential to contribute to situated understandings of intersecting cultural identities in NPOs.

Second, as the nonprofit sector is central to the vitality and health of democratic societies (e.g., Clarke, 2001; Smith, 2005), such a focus is important because it has practical implications not only for sustaining and strengthening the impact of NPOs but also for better understanding the role of community organizations in socially just endeavors. This may enable women and people of color to participate more fully in the United States as a democratic society. Through better understandings of how individuals

working in NPOs navigate intersecting cultural identities and positions into which they are produced by contextual factors such as immigration policies and economic conditions, this dissertation has the potential of summarizing discursive trends and creating recommendations for NPOs and the communities they serve.

Third, the focus on experiences of intercultural relationships is much needed. Such a focus will advance our currently limited knowledge of relating across cultural borders and boundaries including national, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, gendered, or educational (e.g., L. Chen, 2002; Collier, 2003a). Also, the focus on intercultural relationships will have potential practical significance by providing evidence that may be used to promote just, equitable, and humanitarian intercultural relationships.

### **Dissertation Preview**

The remaining chapters explore communication issues in the context of how discourses from group members working in two social justice-oriented NPOs reflect the NPO's identity, negotiation of their intersecting cultural identities, and what the discourses produce. Chapter 2 provides more background on: (a) the contextual foundations of this study in terms of the development of NPOs in the United States, (b) the theoretical foundations of this study in terms of my metatheoretical position informed by an integrated critical/interpretive theoretical orientation, and (c) foundations of this study in terms of cultural identity theory and standpoint theory as they relate to cultural identity negotiation. Chapter 3 details: (a) a version of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a theoretically and methodologically driven method that frames and guides my data analysis and interpretation, and (b) a dual case study approach that informs my data collection processes in terms of public texts and discourses, informant interviews, and

participant observation. Chapter 4 analyzes the findings from Center of Peace for Asians (CPA). Chapter 5 analyzes findings from Social Enterprise of Hispanic Women (SEHW). Chapter 6 concludes with implications, limitations, and suggestions for theorists and practitioners.

## CHAPTER 2:

### CONTEXTUAL, THEORETICAL, AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

“Engaged scholarship holds out the hope of enriched ways of talking and better forms of knowledge...I suggest that the outcome of successful engagement is the enrichment of the everyday ways of talking and thinking about communication by both scholars and other communities, by providing a more useful vocabulary. ... I think engagement has three interactive moments – understanding, reflection, and invention” (Deetz, 2008, p. 295).

This quote from Stanley Deetz (2008) on theorizing engagement is not intended to supply an exhaustive understanding of communication theorizing as engaged scholarship. Rather, it suggests that scholars should argue for practical and alternative outlooks on communication theorizing, and it highlights the need for communication theory building to be socially relevant and responsible not only to the academy but also to broader communities at large. As Michael Pfau (2008) questions with urgency, “Why isn’t scholarly output in communication of greater interest and importance” to scholars both across the communication discipline and in allied disciplines (p. 597)? Scholars have offered several accounts of some of the challenges facing communication theorizing. Some like Berger (1991), Swanson (1993), and Pfau (2008) have pointed out the problems of fragmentation, disconnection, and insularity associated with both the increasing growth of communication as a field and an unrelenting pressure for scholars to specialize. Others like Craig (1993) pinpoint the lack of coherent vocabularies with which to reflect on and talk about the range of theoretical work in the field of communication. In addition, Craig (2007) advocates for giving greater attention to problem-based communication theorizing that addresses the tension between sophistication and relevance. Still others like Benoit and Holbert (2008), Herbst (2008)

and Pfau (2008) highlight the lack of attention to possible epistemological, disciplinary, and methodological intersections between communication and allied disciplines such as psychology, business management, cultural studies, and women's studies.

As outlined earlier, theorizing about communication from the lens of engagement offers one possible approach for communication scholarship to obtain greater practical relevance and intellectual sophistication. Also, the lens of engagement seems to offer creative spaces for academics and practitioners to work together in dynamic configurations to address communication issues and advance theorizing of communication problems. Furthermore, intercultural communication scholars such as Broome, Carey, de la Garza, Martin, and Morris (2005) argue that intercultural communication research "is poised to take an 'activist turn' that accentuates the connection between academic work and the worlds in which academics perform that work" (p. 146). For Broome and his colleagues, both *engaged scholarship* and *activist research* represent an explicit acknowledgment of commitment to promote socially just practices of intercultural communication. Whereas *engaged scholarship* is committed to the issue or issues at hand and includes attention to the role of researcher, *activist research* is committed to working toward specific outcomes. This project is committed to the issues of the cultural struggles around relating across lines of unequal differences.

Deetz (2008) argues that the notion of engagement contains three interactive moments, key ingredients for engaged scholarship to be able to enrich everyday ways of talking and thinking about communication. First, there are moments of "understanding." For Deetz, the focus of understanding, here in the hermeneutic sense, is on the world in which others live. Second, there are moments of "reflection" in which the political nature

of thoughts, feelings, and actions are identified with the aims of challenging assumptions and disrupting established orders. Third, there are moments of “invention” to improvise new vocabularies and descriptions of a more complicated world.

Aiming for this dissertation to be socially relevant to practices of intercultural communication, the lens of engagement is particularly useful to guide the philosophical thinking behind theorizing cultural identity negotiation during moments of connection and disconnection in intercultural relationships. Grounded in Deetz’s (2008) three key elements of engagement (i.e., understanding, reflection, and invention), theorizing from the lens of engagement translates into three intertwined goals upon which my theorizing is premised. First, my theorizing seeks to understand the world reflected in interview discourses and organizational documents about nonprofit intercultural relationships and the work of the nonprofit sector. Second, my theorizing aims to uncover the politics, assumptions, and premises revealed in interview discourses and organizational documents. Finally, my theorizing strives to have implications for improving the ways in which individuals in nonprofit organizations (NPOs) negotiate their cultural identities, build sustainable intercultural relationships, and accomplish the work of the nonprofits.

With these goals in mind, I explore in this chapter the contextual, theoretical and conceptual foundations of this study. I first review the sociohistorical development of NPOs in the United States. Then, I address my overarching theoretical positioning and delineate the specific theoretical frames I adopt to examine intersecting cultural identities in nonprofit intercultural relationships. Finally, I review key constructs in my theorizing.

## **Development of Nonprofit Organizations in the United States**

Each NPO has a particular history and set of social conditions under which it operates. Individuals in each NPO interact with one another based in part upon their interpretations of the history of the NPO, for the work being done, and the resources available to the NPO. To contextualize this dissertation, I extract from relevant literature on the nonprofit sector and NPOs in the United States to address: (a) what characterizes the nonprofit sector in the United States, (b) what societal conditions give rise to NPOs in the United States, and (c) what societal constraints face NPOs in the United States.

Nonprofit organization (NPO), in general, is the term used to refer to an organization that exists to meet either the goals of the public at large (i.e., public-serving nonprofit institutions) or the goals of a specific subset of the public that supports it (i.e., member-serving nonprofit institutions) (McLaughlin, 1986; Salamon, 1997). Despite great diversity and many differences within the nonprofit sectors, Salamon (1997) synthesizes five key elements that historically constitute a formally structured and legally recognized NPO in the United States:<sup>8</sup> (a) the status of an organization, (b) self-governance, (c) independence or distinction from the governmental apparatus, (d) nondistribution of profits to directors, and (e) commitment to serving some public purpose as judged by the U.S. Congress and many state and local legislatures that accord entitlement to full or partial exemption from many forms of taxation. Given this conceptualization, the first nonprofit corporation of formal structure and legal recognition on the U.S. soil was Harvard College established in the mid-1600s by an act of the

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<sup>8</sup> According to Hasenfeld and Gidron (2005), most scholars such as Salamon primarily study formally structured and legally recognized nonprofit service organizations. These exclude social movement organizations and autonomous volunteer-run associations.



General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony with £ 400 British pounds in capital and a dedicated tax for operating support (Nielsen, 1979, as cited in Salamon, 1997).

From a legal standpoint based on the U.S. tax law, a broad distinction that differentiates NPOs from business or profit organizations is their tax exempt status under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code. This accords all NPOs exemption from federal income tax. The nonprofit sector generally includes hospitals, churches, colleges, universities, social service or charitable agencies, trade associations, civic organizations, community organizations, museums, unions, and symphony orchestras. As there are many different types of nonprofit institutions (e.g., member-serving institutions, public-serving institutions, and multi-purpose hybrid voluntary organizations), the Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code further establishes distinctive criteria to govern the operation of different subtypes of NPOs from 501(c)1 to 501(c)28. The majority of so-called “charitable,” public-serving NPOs form the heart of the nonprofit sectors in the United States and fall under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code (DiMaggio & Anheir, 1990; Salamon, 1997). Besides the federal tax-exempt advantage, 501(c)3 organizations not only are accorded the privilege of receiving tax-deductible contributions<sup>9</sup> but also are subject to nondistribution constraints.<sup>10</sup> Since not all social justice-oriented organizations are registered as 501(c)3 organizations and not all registered 501(c)3 organizations are committed to affording fair treatment and human rights to oppressed groups, this project focuses on NPOs that are both social justice-

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<sup>9</sup> Tax-deductible contributions are those that donors can deduct from their income in computing their tax liabilities (Salamon, 1997, p. 6).

<sup>10</sup> The nondistribution constraint proscribes distributing net income as dividends or above-market remuneration (DiMaggio & Anheir, 1990, p. 138).

oriented and legally registered as the 501(c)3s as tax-exempt and prohibited from distributing profits.

Historically, there have been several societal or social conditions giving rise to NPOs in the United States. First, status groups with political power have been active in forming and promoting NPOs for different purposes. For example, in the late 1800s, emerging upper classes were active in forming charitable and cultural enterprises in order to control unruly urban environments. McCarthy's (1982) study of charity and cultural philanthropy in Chicago between 1849 and 1929 found that the emerging upper classes also formed family welfare, medical charities, and cultural institutions to perform functions of social welfare. Also, ethnic and religious status groups throughout history have been active in forming NPOs to address their own unmet needs and provide "collective goods" supported by their specific communities (DiMaggio & Anheir, 1990; Salamon, 1997, p. 8). Recently, there are examples of other status groups such as LGBT and immigrant groups that have formed NPOs to meet their own specific goals (e.g., Hung, 2007; Smith, 2005).

Professionals have also created NPOs to address their unmet needs for: service ethos, autonomy from market values, and exercise of expertise on behalf of the common good. DiMaggio and Anheir (1990) summarize that, during the Progressive Era, the organizing impulse for NPOs shifted from local upper classes to nationally mobilizing professionals. By the 1920s, professionals employed by NPOs were dominant voices in the national discourse. However, due to competitive pressures, the rise of highly paid advocates and lobbyists, and changes in administrative structures, the influence of professionals on national policies and politics eventually declined.

By 1960, the state entered the scene and joined status groups and professionals in expanding and supporting NPOs (DiMaggio & Anheir, 1990). Beginning with the Great Society era of the mid 1960s, the federal government widely expanded governmental support to NPOs (Salamon, 1997). Such vast expansion was the federal government's response to pressures and demands of alleviating serious poverty and distress that gradually surfaced in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Specifically, the U.S. government rapidly expanded and delegated a host of new programs for NPOs to implement through grants and contracts. As a result, by 1975, the U.S. government had replaced private donors as the largest source of NPO support.

Second, certain ideological conditions at the national level have given rise to the emergence of NPOs. As Salamon (1997) argues “ Perhaps most fundamentally, the nonprofit sector functions as a ‘value guardian’ in U.S. American society, as an exemplar and crucial embodiment of a fundamental national value emphasizing *individual initiative in the public good*” (p. 7, emphasis in original). As much as NPOs are guardians of those fundamental values that the United States is founded on such as individualism and democracy, the U.S. NPOs are very much born, defined, and enabled by those same values that they are charged to protect.

Individualism, commonly associated with key terms like “individual,” “freedom,” and “autonomy,” characterizes NPOs in the United States. As a guardian of individualism, NPOs become a mechanism for promoting and protecting the right to individual initiatives and actions in the pursuit of public purposes. In some instances, NPOs function as a first line response to social or economic problems and needs, such as poverty, discrimination, and environmental pollution. In other instances, NPOs serve as a

vehicle through which publicly financed services can be delivered. The climate of individualism encourages NPOs to express their individuality and exercise their freedom of expression and action.

Democracy is another fundamental value and ideology that characterizes NPOs in the United States. While individualism accords NPOs with individual initiatives and individuality, the discourse of democracy directs NPOs to privilege notions of pluralism, diversity, equality, and freedom. As democracy in the United States coexists with a capitalistic economic system premised on the belief in free markets, inevitably the capitalistic economic system implicates the ways in which NPOs are able to promote democratic values, beliefs, and practices.

Regardless of the extent to which NPOs actually function to promote and encourage democratic citizenship, dealing with issues of civic engagement and civil or equal rights movements are often the priorities of NPOs in the United States. As the guardians of American democracy, NPOs are often charged with the task of upholding a democratic polity powered by a market system through promoting pluralism and giving voice to under-represented groups and points of view.

With respect to the societal constraints facing NPOs in the U.S, scholars have widely cited Salamon's (1997) report stating that the U.S. nonprofit sector is faced with significant challenges that are fiscal, economic, political, and philosophical and moral. First, the fiscal crisis that began during the Bush administration, as a result of government budget cuts, threatens to disrupt an important historical partnership between the government and the nonprofit sector. Second, the economic crisis of struggling to survive the budget cuts and slow growth in private-giving, joined by competition from for-profit

providers, either (a) demands NPOs to charge fees for their services or (b) leads NPOs in abandon their nonprofit form in order to advance commercial pursuits. Third, the crisis of accountability not only refers to the effectiveness of nonprofit activities but also demands adequate performance measures and accountability mechanisms that are primarily absent in NPOs. Fourth, the crisis of legitimacy as a result of a growing mismatch between the way NPOs actually operate and the public understanding or imagination of what a NPO should be challenges NPOs to engage in greater transparency and advocacy.

In particular, women's NPOs and/or non-government groups have also been examined from the lens of feminism with respect to issues such as agency, community, empowerment, feminist engagement, and communicative labor (e.g., Dales, 2009; Dempsey, 2009; Joseph, 2002). While NPOs and groups *of* and *for* women may not situate themselves in discourses of feminism, Dales (2009) argues that women's groups are "sites of feminist engagement" because they not only highlight the breadth and influence of women's issues but also signal the potential ramifications of failing to attend to women's concerns (p. 38). Identifying women's groups and organizations as feminist spaces has the advantage of inviting questions and explorations of how theories and practices of feminism are embodied or enacted.

Whereas the existing literature has painted a dynamic picture of intersecting legal, sociohistorical, philosophical, and economic conditions and challenges confronting NPOs in the United States, there is limited scholarship that examines and analyzes how such macro-level conditions may exert influences at the micro-level of individual NPOs. Thus, this dissertation aims to build understanding of the ways in which individuals in two NPOs negotiate their intersecting cultural identities and their intercultural relationships as

well as the macro-level influences that enable and constrain the process of building sustainable intercultural relationships.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

### ***Metatheoretical Positionality***

Consistent with the spirit of engaged scholarship described above, the metatheoretical position I adopt for building knowledge about cultural identity negotiation and intercultural relationship builds upon critical humanism. Burrell and Morgan's (1988) two-dimensional framework of different approaches to social theory features (a) a subjective-objective dimension about the nature of social science and (b) an order-coercion/conflict dimension about the nature of society. What is relevant to my study are both subjectivism that assumes realities to be internal, subjective, and socially constructed, and also a coercion or conflict view of society that assumes modes of structural domination and structural contradiction in which human beings are simultaneously dominated by superstructures and accorded some agency or voluntarism in society. This approach is founded upon both subjectivism and the work of critical theorists such as Althusser (1971), Gramsci (1971), and Horkheimer and Adorno (2002). Martin and Nakayama (1999) explain that "critical humanist scholars attempt to work toward articulating ways in which humans can transcend and reconfigure the larger social frameworks that construct cultural identities in intercultural settings" (p. 8).

I subscribe to certain specific assumptions about the ontology of culture, identity, and communication. I, as the researcher, am not separate from, but a part of how meanings are constructed in this study. Thus, I attempt to make explicit below the biases I bring into this project. In terms of communication, I assume communication and culture

to constitute and be constituted by each other. Communication actions are contextual and processual in that they are “embedded within complex cultural and ideological formations” (Hegde, 1996, p. 310). With respect to culture, it is a constantly contested site of struggle as well as socially constructed group affiliations. Cultures are discursive and textual sites where various meanings are symbolically (re)created, (re)produced, and negotiated as contingent on intersecting modes of domination such as social systems, ideological structures, political institutions, and historical conditions. As far as group identity affiliations are concerned, one’s view or conception of self as a member of multiple groups is contextually and constitutively constructed and negotiated in relations to others and with the larger discursive systems or frameworks such as race, class, and gender (e.g., Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

Overall, I assume individuals in relation to the society in which they live have varying yet limited levels of agency, autonomy, or voluntarism in their communication actions and identity negotiations despite the presence of somewhat deterministic superstructures of domination. As much as I agree with Althusser (1971) and Gramsci (1971) that those superstructures are deterministic, I believe that individuals as group members have a certain level of agency, though limited, for social change to be possible.

I also assume that intercultural relationships in NPOs serve some desired functions that are personal, relational, and political. In this project, I do not assume that group members working in the same organization would have a consistent view on their shared intercultural relationships. Rather, I am interested in exploring how intercultural relationships come about and what functions they serve. Also, I assume cultural identity

negotiation matters for intercultural relationships in that individuals negotiate their divergent and multiple cultural identities through interaction.

The negotiation of cultural identity is both a process and an enactment in which one embodies, speaks from, and acts on multiple and often intersecting cultural identities. The negotiation of cultural identities becomes evident in moments of relational connections and disconnections where one is called upon by identity needs to make choices to connect with or disconnect from one's relational partner(s).

In terms of the intersections between identity and intercultural relationship, I assume that the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities is necessary for the building of intercultural relationships, and that these relationships are characterized by dynamic degrees of interdependence, connection, or belonging. Finally, cultural identities are not only socially constructed but a site of struggle or "a contested zone" in that status positions of cultural groups are (re)produced by institutional policies and organizational policies (Martin & Nakayama, 2004, p. 80). Finally, I assume individuals are able to conceptualize and describe their cultural identities and relationship negotiation processes. Thus, my assumption based in this critical humanist metatheoretical orientation are consistent with integrating interpretive and critical approaches to conducting research inquiry outlined below.

### ***Theoretical Orientations***

I choose to integrate interpretive and critical approaches to knowledge building. The employment of integrating interpretive and critical approaches in this dissertation is supported by Martin and Flores' (1998) argument that interparadigmatic research and dialogue can enhance current understandings of culture and communication. This is also



endorsed by Lee, Wang, Chung, and Hertel's (1995) contention that situating intercultural communication problems in a purely consciousness-based structure ignores the impact of multi-layered familial, regional, political, historical, and institutional forces on intercultural interactions. Thus, an integrative move of combining interpretive and critical approaches enables me to examine and analyze the relationships between situated experiences and the broader social contexts.

In this project, the employment of integrating interpretive and critical approaches is necessary to advance knowledge building about how individuals in NPOs negotiate their cultural identities during moments of connection and disconnection by considering the macro contextual constraints on intercultural relating. Collier (2003b) states that "there are more ideological forces, institutional policies and practices, and social norms that reinforce hierarchy and elites keeping their privileges in place than there are ideologies, policies, practices and norms encouraging and rewarding intercultural alliances" (p. 14). The collection of essays in *Intercultural Alliances: Critical Transformation* (Collier, 2003a) demonstrates specifically how forces like histories, whiteness ideology, academic institutions, and political policies act to constrain alliance relationships. Hence, knowledge building about intercultural relationships would be incomplete without considering how macro structural forces act to constrain or encourage them. That is, it is necessary not only to advance knowledge about how individuals negotiate their cultural identities but also to build knowledge around how macro structural forces function to enable and constrain intercultural relationships with attention to the role of cultural identity negotiation.

Scholars of communication using an interpretive perspective often seek to build understanding of the distinctive and situated system of principles related to culture that people use to interpret or make sense of their lives (Collier & Thomas, 1988; P.-W. Lee, 2006; Philipsen, 1990; Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005; Sorrells & Nakagawa, 2008). In this study, an interpretive perspective is particularly useful in understanding and describing the processes of how individuals in NPOs negotiate their cultural identities as they develop sustainable intercultural relationships. Since scholars using an interpretive perspective to inquiry are concerned with how people interpret meanings or make sense of their experiences for themselves (e.g., Potter, 1996), an interpretive analysis of individuals' interview discourses can shed light on the communicative process of the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities associated with the development of sustainable intercultural relationships. Also, an interpretive perspective enables researchers to “focus on reciprocal and emergent relationships between communication and culture” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 23), because this perspective emphasizes the social construction of cultural knowledge and identities in overlapping institutional, historical, political, and socioeconomic contexts. However, knowledge of people's experiences and sense-making frameworks is incomplete when the structural forces or social systems that both enable and constrain people's lives and experiences are not considered.

Critical approaches complement interpretive inquiry, therefore, in this project. Scholars of communication using a critical perspective typically seek to uncover structures of hierarchy and analyze how power, history and ideology function to maintain dominance that unjustly subjugates the others. Often critical scholars have the purpose of

promoting change and justice, if not emancipation (e.g., Chavez, under review; Chuang, 2003; Hardt, 1992; Shome, 2003). In this project, a critical perspective is useful in uncovering the role of macro structural forces, such as white supremacy, classism, colonialism, patriarchy, immigration policies, and institutional norms within U.S. American societies, in cultural identity and relationship negotiation. Additionally, the integration of interpretive and critical approaches in this study assumes that structural critiques become particularly relevant to understanding identity and relationship negotiation when they are revealed in the respondents' discourses about their own experiences and views.

In this project, my theoretical goals are to first understand how individuals working in NPOs negotiate their intersecting cultural identities and sustainable intercultural relationships, and then to uncover and examine ideologies and contextual structures that enable and constrain particular identity positions and relationships as well as enhance or impede the work of the NPOs. Issues of power relations (and structures of oppressions) are examined in the interview discourses from respondents, organizational documents, and content of meetings attended. I consider ideologies and social structures revealed in the discourses as they relate to identities such as race, class, gender, nationality, and sexual identity and how they contest, intersect, and support existing relationships of domination in the two nonprofits. Key constructs examined are explained below.

### **Key Constructs and Conceptual Foundations**

#### ***Culture and Identities***

In this increasingly diversified, fragmented, and postmodern world, conceptualizing *culture* and *identity* in ways that are not overly reductionist or simplified

is both critical and challenging. Scholars from various fields have offered competing notions of culture. Along Louis Althusser's (1969) theoretical continuum between structural determinism and relative voluntarism, culture has been conceptualized as a fixed "base and superstructure" by critical scholars like Raymond Williams<sup>11</sup> (2002) to individually chosen "tool-kits" by interpretive scholars like Ann Swidler<sup>12</sup> (1986). I concur with Spillman (2002) that culture is essentially "processes of meaning-making" at the structural, institutional, national, local, group, and personal levels (p. 2). *Culture*, in this project, is defined as a shared and contested, historically situated, socially constructed, contextually constrained, and constantly negotiated system of group identities (Collier, 1998, 2005b). Thus, culture in this study encompasses systems of group identities such as religion, ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, profession, generation, political affiliation, and socioeconomic class.

As cultural identities are not only multi-faceted, overlapping, and paradoxical, but also are discursively constructed and contextually constituted (e.g., Collier, 1998; Hall, 1996), scholars have multiple views about the core of identity. For example, a sociological perspective tends to define social identity based on the interconnectedness between self and society. Accordingly, social psychologists like Henri Tajfel (1982) have deliberately defined social identity as "that *part* of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 2, emphasis

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<sup>11</sup> Neo-Marxist Raymond Williams theory of culture is grounded in his notion of the fixed or deterministic "base and superstructure," in which the economic and political base of a society determines its cultural forms and practices.

<sup>12</sup> Cultural Sociologist Ann Swidler constructs culture as "a 'tool-kit' of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views" (p. 273, emphasis in original) that provides people with resources to formulate actions. This view constructs individuals as relatively active agents with freedom to choose their cultural expressions.

in original). Scholars of cultural studies like Paul Gilroy (1996) argue that the concept of identity centers on questions of the self and tend to approach identity via issues of “identity as subjectivity” and social status positioning related to problems of cultural politics (p. 40). In the discipline of communication, Karen Tracy’s (2002) work on talk and identity approaches identity as constituted by and through communication. That is, as Tracy (2002) states, on the one hand, people’s choices of communication constitute who they are; on the other hand, how people view themselves shapes how they communicate.

Situated in the context of intercultural relationships in nonprofits, I am interested in examining cultural group identities. Johnson and Bhatt (2003), based on their autoethnographic study of alliance building across race and gender in intercultural communication classes, endorse the important task of “theorizing identity as relational” (p. 230). They argue, to identify with and create bonds between people differentially positioned in power hierarchies requires embodied practices and willingness to make a “self” humble as well as vulnerable to an “other,” particularly when the “self” is scribed with privilege and power. They also advocate that the key “in the quest to build alliance is the ability to identify, resist, and transform when identity is used oppressively” (p. 242). I also follow Yep’s (2002) definition of identity as “a person’s conception of self within a particular social, geographical, cultural, and political context” (p. 61). I am interested in cultural group identities as well as the “identity” of relational allies. *Identity* in this project is broadly conceptualized as a person’s conception and construction of her/himself, in relation to others, as a member of multiple groups and having intersecting status positions related to gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality as well as relational partners in a particular setting.

*Cultural Identity Theory*: My conception of cultural identity builds on previous scholarship on cultural identity theory (CIT) as originally conceptualized by Collier and Thomas (1988) and later extended by Hecht, Collier and Ribeau (1993) and Collier (1998, 2005b). This line of scholarship basically views cultural identity as the enactment and negotiation of social identification by group members in a particular interactional context that demonstrates their affiliation and understanding of the premises and practices required to be a group member, and the ability to perform practices of membering (Collier, 1998, 2005b; Collier & Thomas, 1988). Later with the incorporation of a critical perspective, Collier (2005b) conceptualizes cultural identification as a move to locate oneself and one's alignments in complex cultural webs and dynamic relations with others. As Collier articulates:

Cultural identifications are shared locations and orientations evidenced in a variety of communication forms including conduct of groups of people, discourse in public texts, mediated forms, artistic expressions, and individual accounts and ascriptions about group conduct. These group identifications are locations that are fluid and have shifting boundaries, implicate actual and imagined communities, and reflect, to some degree, shared communication norms and practices (Collier, 2005b, p. 237).

Such a view of cultural identity as shared yet fluid locations of speaking and acting is consistent with my ontological assumptions about socially constructed realities in this dissertation.

Grounded in the theoretical framework of cultural identity theory, I uphold certain key ontological and epistemological assumptions in framing my view of cultural identities. The basic ontological premise is that individuals have intersecting cultural identities and have multiple memberships, whether active or passive, in many different cultural groups. Also, cultural identities are both enduring and changing locations of

speaking and acting that are historically situated, socially constructed, and institutionally enabled and constrained in discursive practices and interactions. As a result, different cultural identities as associated with different institutional structures such as racism, classism, sexism, and colonialism entail varying levels of status, access, and agency as contingent upon what the context is, who is present, and what the issue(s) at hand. For example, Newman and Ellis' (1999) study on 200 African-American and Latino/a fast-food workers and job seekers reveals the particular salience of working-class identities and positions in discourses and how they work to stigmatize and subjugate those working-class minorities in that setting.

Consistent with an integrated critical/interpretive theoretical orientation, my approach in this project to knowledge building about cultural identities focuses on participants' discourses of coming to know and understand who they are in the context of relationship co-construction and how their identities and relationships are both enabled and constrained by contextual, ideological, and institutional structures. By viewing identities as discursively constructed, I acknowledge that the discourse acts to, as Louis Althusser (1971) contends, "interpellate" or "hail" individuals into subjects through language that constructs social positions where subjects can utilize resources made available through discursive formations and practices to construct and negotiate between who they think they are and who others expect them to be. Similar to Scollon and Scollon's (2001) mediated discourse approach to intercultural communication,<sup>13</sup> I am particularly interested in the co-constructive aspects of identities in communication

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<sup>13</sup> Scollon and Scollon (2001) approach intercultural communication as "interdiscourse communication" in which all communication is constitutive of prior cultural categories as archives or tools through which social actions are taken by interactants (p. 544). Thus, this mediated discourse approach shifts the focus from individuals involved in communication to mediated action as social action since the central concern of this approach is social change, not persons.

practices where the subjects rely on prior historical and cultural categories to engage in social actions. Here the subjects do have certain levels of agency, though limited, in making choices in negotiating the construction of who they are in a given communication interaction or event.

In this project, analyzing and interpreting participants' discourses will enable me to not only gain knowledge of their own views of their cultural identities in relation to their allies but also obtain knowledge of how their cultural identities are enabled and constrained by contextual forces. Featuring forms of knowledge about cultural identities, as well as what is accomplished by the discourse such as status positioning in intercultural relationships, opens up the possibilities for promoting just and equitable intercultural relationships in that instances of subjugation of other cultural groups and resistance can be identified. For example, Baker's (2004) study on Mexican immigrants in Iowa highlights the significance of gender in structuring those immigrant women's experiences. Some women transgressed or violated traditional gender behavior patterns (e.g., leaving their homeland and working in the paid labor force) so as to maintain traditional gender ideologies (e.g., improving lives of children and dedication to extended family) that were deemed central to their lives. Baker's study endorses the importance of not only featuring the voices of the participants but also examining the ideological forces that structure their voices, as this study intends to do.

### ***Properties and Processes of Cultural Identities***

Essentially, cultural identities are understood as socially constructed, structurally enabled, discursively constituted locations of being, speaking, and acting that are enduring as well as constantly changing, multiple yet nonsummative, and political as well



as paradoxical (Collier, 2005b; Yep, 2004). Collier and Thomas (1988) and Collier (1998, 2005b) posit different properties and processes associated with cultural identity enactment, including avowal, ascription, scope, salience, and intensity. First, cultural identities differ in scope or “the breadth and generalizability” in terms of the number of people or frequency with which a certain identity such as nationality or class applies (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 113). Second, cultural identities differ in the salience, importance, of particular identities relative to other potential identities across situational contexts, time, and interaction. For example, a working-class Asian woman in the presence of a group of working-class Asian men might be more acutely conscious of her identity as a woman more than her other identities. Third, cultural identities vary in the levels of intensity with which they are communicated. For example, Gust Yep (2004) discusses how he is often ascribed the identity of an Asian American because he “looks Asian American;” however, he prefers and uses the label “Asianlatinoamerican” to highlight his claim to and the increasing presence of multicultural and multiracial identities in the United States.

The processes of avowal and ascription are also applicable to this project. Avowal patterns refer to how group members present themselves as group members to others. On the other hand, ascription patterns are views of one’s own group communicated by others. There are often tensions and contradictions in the group identities that are avowed and ascribed since they involve different experiences, levels of agency, histories, perspectives, and worldviews. In this project as part of cultural identity negotiation, I am interested in examining both avowal and ascription and also the extent to which there is consistency or contradiction between avowals and ascriptions. Finally, cultural identities

have both content aspects and relational aspects that are of interest to this project, especially in considering the role of cultural identity negotiation in intercultural relationships.

Overall, the cultural identity theory provides a useful framework in guiding and framing my thinking about the role of cultural identity negotiation in intercultural relationships. The specific properties and processes of cultural identities laid out in the framework of cultural identity theory (i.e., avowal, ascription, scope, salience, and intensity) are starting points for theorizing about how relational partners with divergent cultural identities negotiate who they are in relation to each other as they manage to build relationships with each other in order to achieve their social justice-oriented goals. However, cultural identity theory is limited in understanding and explaining the role of cultural identities in intercultural relationship development, especially how relational partners navigate the different properties and processes of cultural identities as specified in this theory. Cupach and Metts (as cited in Imahori & Cupach, 2005) argue for the need to “provide insight into how intercultural partners overcome the cultural barriers that can undermine the formation of a successful close relationship” (p. 208). How intercultural partners utilize cultural difference as enabling the work of the nonprofit is also important. Thus, this project will take steps to address this void by examining the ways in which partners negotiate their cultural identities from a perspective of cultural identity theory.

### ***Intersecting Standpoints: Identity Positioning and Power Structures***

I concur with Johnson and Bhatt (2003) that race, gender, class, religion, nationality, or sexual identity cannot be examined in isolation; rather, scholars need to “study how each and all of these (as well as other identities) intersect and inform each

other” (p. 234). In this project, I also rely on standpoint theory (ST) as a framework to examine the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities in intercultural relationships. Standpoint theory is valuable for analyzing identities as “differential social locations within society” (Adams & Phillips, 2006, p. 274). Such view of identities as social locations is consistent and compatible with the conception of cultural identities as locations of speaking and acting in cultural identity theory framework. My reliance on standpoint theory is endorsed by Adams and Phillips (2006) who advocate for applying standpoint theory in identity research for “its sensitivity to social position and its emphasis on the voice of the population members” (p. 275). Moreover, Adams and Phillips’ study on the experiences of eight two-spirited<sup>14</sup> lesbian and Native Americans provides empirical support for applying standpoint theory to examine the intersections of different identities.

“A feminist standpoint” was originally conceptualized by Nancy Hartsock (1983, 1997, 1998) based on Marxian theory and critique of capitalism to construct a specifically feminist historical materialism. Using a standpoint to mean both “an interested position” and “the sense of being engaged” (Hartsock, 1998, p. 107), Hartsock claims that women’s material lives differ structurally from those of men. Also, the concept of a standpoint assumes that “epistemology grows in a complex and contradictory way from material life” (Hartsock, 1998, p. 108). Overall standpoint theorists such as Krollokke and Sorensen (2006) are committed to theorizing the

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<sup>14</sup> Adams and Phillips (2006) explain that the term *two-spirit* is used in academia to refer to a number of Native American identities that include but are not limited to: (a) Native Americans who are lesbian or gay; (b) Native Americans who are transgender; and (c) Native Americans who follow some or all of the parameters of alternative gender roles specific to their tribe or pan-ethnicity. In their study, Adams and Phillips use the term *two-spirited* to refer to “contemporary Native Americans whose sense of selves are partially informed by their knowledge of alternate gender roles that functions within some tribe (or tribes) before and briefly following European invasions” (p. 274).

standpoints of women in the context of capitalism. Hence, since this project primarily is concerned with two groups of women, Hispanics and Asians/Asian Americans in the United States, standpoint theory is an applicable framework to understand the social locations of these women in a capitalistic society.

Hartsock's theory of feminist standpoints was later critiqued by female scholars of color such as Patricia Hill Collins (1997, 2000) who recognized intersecting standpoints among women along lines of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, power, and so on. In particular, Collins' (1997, 2000) theorizing from the lens of black feminist thought examines both the particularity of racism, classism, and sexism and the intersectionality of the ways in which they work together to (re)produce domination or "a legacy of struggle" (1997, p. 244). Thus, standpoint epistemology, as articulated by Collins, is applicable to this project for examining and understanding the ways in which intersecting identities as standpoints or social locations function. For example, standpoints may reveal the (re)production of power relations in intercultural relationships, with regard to the sexual division of labor, decision-making processes, reproductive responsibilities, access to resources, etc. Additionally, such a focus builds on the limited research that has attended to the intersections of different identities and how these identities relate to the existing power relations inscribed in contextual structures (e.g., Carrillo Rowe, 2008; Narvaez, Meyer, Kertzner, Ouellette, & Gordon, 2009). In the field of communication, scholars like Wander, Martin, and Nakayama (1999) similarly argue that "race cannot be understood apart from class, gender, and sexual orientation" in examining the ways that white domination continues and reproduces (p. 22).

### *Negotiating Intersecting Cultural Identities*

The negotiation of identities is a process and enactment involving both parties. While this construct of identity negotiation holds great potential for liberation, little scholarship has examined the actual processes of negotiating identities, even though communication scholars have offered several different conceptualizations of the process of negotiation (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005; Jackson, 1999; Ting-Toomey, 2005). McCall and Simmons (1966) define the negotiation of social identities as a process of bargaining over the terms of exchange for social rewards. Based on a similar notion of a “bargaining process,” Jackson (1999) views cultural identity as the representation of a given culture or worldview and considers negotiating a process in which group members weigh the gain, loss, or exchange of ability to interpret their own values, beliefs, realities, or worldviews. Ting-Toomey (2005) conceptualizes identity as a reflective self-image and treats negotiation as “a transactional interaction process” where individuals in intercultural situations attempt to assert, define, challenge, modify, and/or support their own and others’ self-image(s) (p. 217). I concur with Yep (2002) that identity negotiation can be a liberation process in that both the oppressor and the oppressed might find freedom and also in that individuals might begin to see things from both the center and cultural margins.

While such multiplicity of conceptualizations of “negotiation” and “(cultural) identity negotiation” is a testament to the importance of examining identity negotiation, it also highlights the need to theorize the processes of cultural identity negotiation in this dissertation. One type of identity negotiation that remains largely unexamined is the negotiation of identity positioning in interactional contexts where relational partners

speak and act from differential standpoints or locations. In this project, I define cultural identity negotiation as contextually structured speaking and acting that relational partners enacting divergent cultural identities do as a process over time in various forms of interaction. With this definition of cultural identities negotiation, I am particularly interested in examining the negotiation processes of (a) patterns of avowal and ascription, (b) salience of cultural identities, (c) differential identity positioning, and (d) intersectionality of cultural identities. In this study, the integrative critical/interpretive perspective allows me not only to describe and understand the processes of negotiating different cultural identities and unequal identity positioning, but also critique the contextual structures such as dominant ideologies and political policies that accompany the emerged patterns of identity negotiation. Whereas the interpretive lens focuses my attention on the participants' understanding and construction of their cultural identities in intercultural relationships, the critical lens concentrates my focus on how the participants' construction of their cultural identities and intercultural relationships are ideologically, structurally, and contextually enabled and constrained.

### **Historical Factors related to Asians and Hispanics**

Both NPOs that I work with in this project serve particular underserved cultural/racial groups. Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) is for Asians, whereas Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW) is primarily geared toward Hispanic women. Standpoint theory highlights how social positions of both individuals and groups influence their experiences and material conditions in society. Considering that racial classifications are one dominant category of social positions, stratified and hierarchized racial locations not only influence how people experience the world but also affect how

people interact and communicate with one another. In the space below, I review relevant key histories on the presence and social positions of Asians and Hispanics in the United States. Contrary to the biological thinking of race rooted in modernism and the Enlightenment tradition,<sup>15</sup> I take a social constructionist position to view race as a socially constructed and structurally (re)produced category that has a social reality (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2006). I take to heart Du Bois' (Du Bois, 1996) statement that "race must be understood principally as a cultural and political concept" (p. 37).

### *Asians and Asian Americans in the United States*

In 2006, it was reported that there were a total of 14.4 million Asian Americans in the United States. Throughout U.S. histories, this racial category or position called "Asian (American)" has been both fluid and inflexible. For instance, some Asian Indians were counted as members of a "Hindu" race from 1920 to 1940, while other Asian Indians were considered white prior to 1977 (Orbe & Harris, 2008, p. 31). Also, prior to this label of "Asian," people who were racialized as such were called "Mongolian," "Asiatic," and "Oriental." As a convenient label, this racial category of "Asian American" is imprecise since it functions to lump different cultural/ethnic groups into one umbrella term (Gudykunst, 2001). Additionally, Lee (2005) argues that there are relatively few studies on the experiences of individuals of Asian ancestry in the United States. Overall, there are four racial labels that are identified in the existing literature as

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<sup>15</sup> Scholars such as Goldberg (1993) argue that, in the background of modernism, racial thinking entered the minds of the Europeans in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century out of their encounters with the so-called "uncivilized," "barbarian," or "sub-human" groups in the foreign lands that those Europeans sought to conquer and colonize. Racial categories or classifications based on skin color (i.e., whites, blacks, browns, yellows, and reds) were created to justify and legitimize European colonization of those non-European others. Later, the rise of the so-called "scientific" paradigm rooted in the Enlightenment tradition of progress and rationality focused on testing and ascertaining "scientific" evidence to prove the biological, intellectual, and moral inferiority of the non-European and non-white groups of color such as Blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and Hispanics.

often imposed or ascribed to Asians and Asian Americans: (a) the model minority stereotype, (b) the forever foreigners, (c) the yellow peril, and (d) the honorary white.

*Model Minority Stereotype of Asian Americans:* One of the most influential and prevalent stereotype for Asian Americans today is probably is the model minority. Two articles published in 1966 are deemed responsible for prescribing and constructing the model minority stereotype in the mainstream media: (a) “Success Story, Japanese-American Style,” published in the *New York Times Magazine* on January 9, 1966, and (b) “Success Story of One Minority in U.S.” published in *U.S. News and World Report* on December 26, 1966 that singled out Chinese Americans as good citizens (Kawai, as cited in Kawai, 2005). Then, during the 1980s the model minority stereotype reached beyond Chinese and Japanese Americans to include Southeast Asians who were described in the media as Southeast Asian refugees overcoming extreme obstacles through sheer effort and determination to achieve academic success (S. J. Lee, 1996).

*Forever Foreigner:* Another view of the racial category of Asian Americans is that Asian Americans are the “unassimilable foreigners.” This view is constructed and perpetuated by the Orientalist discourses grounded on the premises that there are innately cultural and biological differences between the “Orientals” and whites and the Orient is the absolute opposite of the Occident (S. J. Lee, 1996; Said, 1979; Yu, 2001). Tuan (1998) argues that Asian Americans have undergone a different racialization process than blacks or other racialized minority groups. The racialization process of Asian Americans is compounded by their nativism and “the stigma of foreignness” (Tuan, 1998, p. 8).

*Yellow Peril:* The term *yellow peril* is believed to originate in the medieval threat of Genghis Khan and Mongolian invasion of Europe and popularized in the late 19<sup>th</sup>



century by German Kaiser, Wilhelm II (Marchetti, 1993, as cited in Kawai, 2005; Thompson, 1978, as cited in Kawai, 2005). The term yellow peril refers to not only cultural threats to white supremacy but also economic, political, and military threats to the white race. Within the United States, the label of yellow peril signified the fear and apprehension of Asian migration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Laffey, 2000, as cited in Kawai, 2005). For instance, in the late 1870s, this notion of yellow peril enabled an anti-Chinese “Yellow Peril” movement against the Chinese in the United States (Zia, 2000, p. 27). Historically, the yellow peril stereotype also provided the needed justification and rationale for excluding Asian immigrants (Okimoto, 1994, as cited in Kawai, 2005).

*Honorary Whites:* In Bonilla-Silva’s (2004) preliminary map of a tri-racial system in the United States, there are three racial categories: (a) whites, (b) honorary whites, and (c) collective blacks. The buffer racial category of honorary whites, as Bonilla-Silva conceptualizes, is a racial category mostly occupied by Asian Americans except for light-skinned Latinos. The majority of Asian Americans are placed into this category of honorary whites, except for a few Asian-origin people, Vietnamese Americans, Hmong Americans, and Laotian Americans, who are derived membership due to association with the U.S. war in Vietnam. So, the racial category of honorary whites seems to be synonymous and primarily equivalent with Asian Americans such as Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Asian Indians, Chinese Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and Filipino Americans. Similar to the model minority stereotype, the racial category of honorary whites may seem flattering and positive on the surface for the

majority of Asian Americans. However, it is still a stereotype that functions to condition and subjugate the experiences of Asian Americans.

The four racial labels prescribed for Asian Americans paint a mixed, ambiguous, and contradictory image of race relations toward Asian Americans in the United States. While the honorary whites and the model minority stereotype seem to indicate racial status advances for many Asian Americans, in contrast, the forever foreigners and the yellow peril stereotype confine Asian Americans to seemingly impossible racial advances. There are limited empirical understandings of how Asians and Asian Americans view who they are in intercultural relationships. Also, little is known about how Asians and Asian Americans negotiate their status positioning as they develop intercultural relationships.

Despite different definitions of the terms Asians and Asian Americans, I use the term *Asians* (first generation) and *Asian Americans* (second generation and beyond, born in the United States) to refer to individuals residing in the United States that self-identify as having Asian ancestry or background. These definitions enable me to examine how individuals with self-identified Asian origin conceive of and understand their identities as Asians and Asian Americans in relation to a multitude of other cultural identities as situated in intercultural relationships. Also, such a definition is open to contextually-structured conceptions of Asian and Asian American presence in the Southwestern portion of the United States. For example, in the Rock Springs Massacre of 1885, an angry mob killed 28 Chinese workers and forced the rest out of a Wyoming mining town. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Socorro, New Mexico, nativists denounced Chinese immigrants in an anti-Chinese riot due to the hiring of a Chinese cook (Iber & de Leon, 2006).

### *Hispanics in the United States*

As racial/ethnic categories are socially constructed and naturalized, the contested term *Hispanic*, similar to the label *Asian*, is a fluid category that functions politically to lump together different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. Whereas the label “Asian” is utilized as a racial category to classify and distinguish those of Asian ancestry by the U.S. Census Bureau,<sup>16</sup> the term *Hispanic*, used in the U.S. Census starting in the 1970s, is treated as an ethnic category with emphasis on sociocultural backgrounds to label and distinguish those of Spanish/Latin American origin such as Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Spanish. According to the U.S. Census, Hispanic people can be of any race such as white Hispanics or black Hispanics. In the 2000 U.S. Census, the term *Hispanic* was used interchangeably with *Spanish* and *Latino*, while the term Chicano was listed under the same box as Mexican and Mexican American. Despite the classification by the U.S. Census Bureau, scholars like Alcoff (1995), Oquendo (1998), and Lopez (1998) protest the erasing of race and racial consciousness facing the mixed-race Latino/a or Mestizo/a identity due to the paradox and myth of racial purity. They also advocate for the inclusion and re-imagining of the Mestizo/a race or the Latino/a race.

There are multiple labels available to identify or refer to individuals and groups of Spanish/Latin American heritage such as: (a) Hispanics, (b) Mestizo/a, (c) Latino/a, and (d) Chicano/a. As there is almost infinite diversity among this group called Hispanics, the multiple terms carry different stereotypes, connotations, and meanings that are historical,

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<sup>16</sup> In the 2000 US Census, the available racial boxes for a person of Asian origin include: Asian Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Other Asian.

social, cultural, or political to different groups. Such multiplicity suggests diverse histories and social experiences across the pan-Hispanic identity.

*Hispanic*: Oquendo (1998) contends that the term *Hispanic* probably derives from “hispanoamericanos,” meaning persons from the former colonies of Spain in the “New World.” In general, the word Hispanic identifies individuals and groups “whose cultural antecedents lie first in Spain and then in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, which include Mexico, Central America, all of South America except Brazil, and several Caribbean nations” (Iber & de Leon, 2006, p. 6). Similarly, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Statistical Directive No. 15 defines Hispanics as the ethnic group, regardless of race, whose culture of origin is Spanish (Toro, 1998). The word Hispanic gained widespread prominence as a label for public identification in the 1960s (Iber & de Leon, 2006). Before then, groups with roots in Latin America or Spain were identified by their nationalities such as Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Nicaraguans.

Since the term *Hispanic* by definition carries a strong association with Spain and Spanish, it has been met with both support and rejection. Iber and de Leon (2006) contend that many individuals and groups of Spanish/Latin American descent endorse the term Hispanic “as a neutral reference appropriate for public discourse” (p. 7) as the U.S. Census intends it. Also, many believe that the word Hispanic could be useful in giving all Hispanic communities their “needed political empowerment” (p. 7). On the contrary, critics of the word Hispanic link it with Spanish colonial power and the Spanish oppressors of the native peoples of America (e.g., Iber & de Leon, 2006; Oquendo, 1998). Others who oppose the term regard it as a euphemism used by some people to

deny or reject their indigenous roots or to elevate themselves socially. Scholars like Toro (1998) argue that the classification of Hispanics as an ethnic rather than a racial group, on the one hand, ignores the racial nature of anti-Hispanic subordination in the United States and, on the other hand, reduces the usefulness of much federal data.

*Mestizo: Mestizaje* refers to the racial mixing or intermarrying usually between indigenous people of South and Central America and European Spaniards (Alcoff, 1995; Iber & de Leon, 2006). *Mestizos/as*, according to Toro (1998), are “persons of mixed European and indigenous heritage” (p. 55). The word *mestizo* is associated with the consciousness, experiences, and identity of mixed-race persons as a result of practices of intermarrying and assimilation between aboriginals of South and Central America and the Spaniards and Spanish Christians. Alcoff (1995) argue that the forms of domination and the practices of assimilation took place and worked differently (a) in North America by the Nordic colonizers from Germano-Protestant England and (b) in South and Central America by the European Spaniards from Roman Catholic Iberia. In the South and Central America, Alcoff argue that *mestizo identity* was the melting pot of peoples and cultures and the blending integrations between race and cultural formations as a result of several factors. First, the indigenous peoples in the South “lived a settled, advanced (even by European standards) agricultural life with large cities and developed class systems” (p. 266). Second, influenced by the spirit of Roman imperialism and its cosmopolitanism, assimilation to the Spaniards meant expansion, development, and growth out of “the constant absorption and blending of difference into an ever larger, more complex, heterogeneous whole” (p. 267).

*Latino/a*: The term *Latino* is short for “latinoamericano,” referring to the peoples whose languages are derived from Latin origin and who come from the territory in the Americas formerly colonized by Latin nations of Europe such as Spain, Portugal, and France (Oquendo, 1998). By this definition, the term Latino seems more inclusive than the term Hispanic because it encompasses people from Brazil and Haiti as well. However, Oquendo (1998) argues that the so-called Latino enthusiasts would use the term to cover only peoples from former Spanish colonies. Still scholars like Oquendo (1998) and Iber and de Leon (2006) advocate that the term Latino should be favored over Hispanic. For Iber and de Leon (2006), Latinos is “a term associated with the struggles waged by the poor and powerless” and is preferred over Hispanics by many academics, labor leaders, and political activists (p. 9). For Oquendo (1998), there are three reasons that make the expression Latino appealing: (a) it calls into mind the Latino/a struggle for empowerment in terms of self-definition and self-assertion in the United States, (b) it is a newer term that invites re-thinking and re-imagining of what belonging in this community is all about, and (c) it is a Spanish word and thus accentuates the bond between Latino/a community and the Spanish language without necessarily assuming that all Latinos/as in the United States speak Spanish.

*Chicano/a*: A Chicano/a is a person of self-identified Mexican background living in the United States (Gonzalez, 2002). The term *Chicano/a* is associated with the Chicana/Chicano people’s historical experiences of racial oppression as well as ongoing racial discrimination against Mexican Americans (Toro, 1998). The term Chicano/a is a politically conscious word that implies pride in the Mexican American culture, history, and indigenous roots, as well as an interest in activism. Mexicans, Mexican Americans,

and Mexican immigrants comprise not only the largest Hispanic or Latino groups in the United States but also the single largest country-of-origin group in the United States. In March 1999, Mexican immigrants accounted for nearly 30% of all immigrants in the United States; the total number of Mexican and Mexican Americans in the United States was 20.6 million, comprising more than 60% of all Hispanics/Latinos in the United States (Gonzalez, 2002). Overall, Gonzalez (2002) found that the majority of Mexicans and Mexican Americans tends to have less education than other immigrants and U.S. Americans, higher rates of poverty, higher unemployment rates, lower annual incomes, and lower overall wealth. Also, Mexicans and Mexican Americans are subjugated to popular stereotypes that Mexican immigrants are either doomed to be dependent on government support or are undocumented immigrants.

In this study, I am interested in how members of the Hispanic/Latino communities residing in the Southwestern part of the United States, who are affiliated with a particular NPO, identify themselves and conceive of their identities as group members with Spanish background who can trace their origins back to what was the former Spanish empire in the South and Central Americas. For the convenience of referencing, I use the term Hispanic consistent with the use by Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW). Historically, the Southwestern region of the United States, except for southern Arizona, belonged to Mexico until 1848. Thus, the cultural roots of the present-day Southwest have Spanish and Mexican influences (Gonzalez, 2002). This contextually-specific understanding is part of what it means to be Hispanic/Latino in the U.S. Southwest.

## Research Questions

Negotiating intersecting cultural identities in nonprofit intercultural relationships warrants further study because it can advance our knowledge and inform the practices of negotiating intersecting cultural identities. There is limited understanding of how intersecting cultural identities are negotiated as well as how intercultural relationships develop, change, function, or terminate in the context of nonprofits. More importantly, negotiating intersecting cultural identities and intercultural relationships has implications for how nonprofits may achieve their charitable missions or address unmet social needs. Hence, relying on the theoretical frameworks of cultural identity theory and standpoint theory, I explore how members of different status groups in two NPOs negotiate their intersecting cultural identities (e.g., avowal, ascription, salience, identity positioning, intersectionality of identities, etc.) and their intercultural relationships. In this study, I am particularly interested in the negotiation of intersecting cultural identities, relational dialectics, and status hierarchies among members of three different status groups that represent three primary perspectives on each of the two NPOs: (a) staff members in leadership or decision-making positions in each NPO; (b) marginalized group members whom each NPO aimed to serve; and (c) individuals who volunteered, were interns, and served on the board. Details on the three status groups are discussed later in the section titled “Interviews” in Chapter 3. Since members’ positions in an organizational hierarchy influence their viewpoints and experiences (e.g., Howard & Geist, 1995), it is necessary to first understand how members placed in different hierarchical levels within an organizations’ structure construct the organization’s identity and work. Therefore, the following research question is posed:



*RQ1: What do discourses reveal about each organization's work and identity?*

As the nonprofit sector is central to the vitality and health of democratic societies (e.g., Clarke, 2001; Smith, 2005), it is imperative to gain knowledge of how the ways in which intersecting cultural identities are negotiated have implications for the socially just endeavors of NPOs. Negotiation of intersecting cultural identities has not received adequate research attention. Thus, I pose the following question.

*RQ2: What do discourses reveal about intersecting cultural identity positions?*

Scholars like Salamon (1997) and Wolch (1999) have articulated several ways in which identity politics matter for NPOs. Nonetheless, there is a gap in the literature about how individuals enacting different cultural identities and placed in different status positions within an organizational hierarchy navigate the inevitable politics of status, privilege, and influence. There is a need for investigating and critiquing intercultural relationships in social justice-oriented NPOs with a focus on negotiating dialectical tensions and status hierarchies. There are a limited number of studies on communication in intercultural relationships (e.g., L. Chen, 2002; P.-W. Lee, 2006; Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003). Also, little is known about what hinders or facilitates the specific ways in which group members build sustainable intercultural relationships with attention to within- and cross-status relationships. Dialectical tensions that emerge in such relationship as individuals conduct the work of a NPO have not been examined. Thus, I propose the following research question to guide my examination and interrogation of how individuals working in two social justice-oriented NPOs experience and negotiate their intercultural relationships.

RQ3: *What do discourses demonstrate with regard to relational dialectical tensions and the negotiation of status hierarchies?*

As a project of engaged scholarship that is committed to the cultural struggles around how individuals relate across lines of difference, it is necessary for this project to analyze and interrogate how contextual structures (e.g., colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, histories, immigration policies, institutional norms, economic recession, etc.) enable and constrain the ways in which individuals working in social justice-oriented NPOs negotiate their intersecting cultural identities and intercultural relationships. Since cultural identities and intercultural relationships are context-bound and intersect with contextual forces (Collier, 2005b), knowledge of either intersecting cultural identities or intercultural relationships is incomplete when the structural forces that both enable and constrain people's lives and experiences are not considered. Ongoing subjugation, marginalization, and contestation of certain cultural groups are perpetuated and reproduced by unequal power relations. Discourses implicate and are affected by ideologies at both the organizational level as well as the broader U.S. societal level. I simply cannot claim to be an interculturalist without giving attention to how social injustice may be rooted in hierarchical relationships and how discourses reveal ideologies and the broader social order. Thus, the following question is posed.

RQ4: *What are the ideological implications of discourses as related to productivity, group relations, and the broader social order?*

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Overview of Methods**

The original Greek meaning of the word *method* means “a route that leads to the goal” (Kvale, 1996, p. 4). Hence, to achieve the goals of describing, interpreting, and critiquing how contextual structures and discursive ideologies enable and constrain the ways in which individuals working in social justice-oriented nonprofit organizations (NPOs) negotiate their intersecting cultural identities and their intercultural relationships, I adopted a critical discourse analysis (CDA) frame as my method of inquiry in this project. Also, I employed a multiple case study approach to guide my process of data collection. In the spirit of engaging in intercultural praxis, the employment of critical discourse analysis enabled me to understand and interrogate the ways in which interview discourses revealed cultural identity positions and intercultural relationships, and what the positions and relationships produced related to hierarchies, ideologies, and broader social order.

### **Research Settings**

The research settings for this project are two social justice-oriented nonprofit organizations (NPOs): Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) and Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW). Both are registered 501(c)(3) tax-exempt NPOs located in a large metropolitan city in the Southwestern U.S. CPA was founded in August 2006, for the mission of ensuring the rights and well-beings of Asians and Asian Americans by providing culturally sensitive social services, information, and referrals primarily dealing with issues related to domestic violence. As a community-based center, CPA provides services to victims of domestic violence, offers bilingual/bicultural staff, licensed

counselors, and interpreters, and addresses cultural and social issues confronting local Asian immigrant and Asian American communities. SEHW was founded by a female social entrepreneur<sup>17</sup> whom I refer to as Sandra, and a group of women collaborators in 1994. As a social enterprise, SEHW works toward its vision of building intergenerational wealth for low-income women and their families through creating employment opportunities and investing in low-income women as leaders of their families and communities. More than just increasing income levels, SEHW conceives *intergenerational wealth* in terms of increased abilities, capabilities, opportunities, and resources for the low-income women and their families.

Prior to gaining written approvals, I first obtained informal verbal agreements from both organizations. On January 27, 2009, I met with the center coordinator of CPA whom I will call Kumico, and two leading counselors for an informal volunteer interview where I explicitly stated my interests in volunteering at CPA and also collecting data for this project. My volunteer application was accepted with the understanding that I would volunteer while collecting data at CPA for my dissertation. At the SEHW's quarterly board meeting on April 7, 2009, I presented preliminary ideas about this dissertation and asked for permission to conduct this study; permission to my request was subsequently granted.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be simultaneously treated as a discipline, as a theoretical framework, or as a theory and method (i.e., Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Weiss & Wodak, 2003b; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). When *theory* and *method* are

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<sup>17</sup> Social entrepreneurs are commonly understood as individuals whose ideas or organizations create new and sustainable markets and services that aim to benefit underserved communities or whose ideas lead to systemic solutions to poverty, education, health, and social justice.

intertwined as in the case of CDA, Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that researchers must first accept the basic philosophical premises of CDA before using it as a method of empirical inquiry. The metatheoretical underpinnings of this project as *critical humanist* are consistent with CDA's philosophical roots in both a *critical-dialectical* concept of theory<sup>18</sup> and a *phenomenological-hermeneutic* approach to theorizing<sup>19</sup> (Weiss & Wodak, 2003a). That is, theorizing in this project is founded on subjective and everyday understandings of social realities and also aims to interrogate contextual structures and domination situated in immediate social conditions and historical contexts.

Accepting the philosophical positions of CDA as a framework means several things for this project. First, this study views the social and cultural processes of cultural identity and relationship negotiation as discursive practices and socially constructed in ways that are contextually constrained and enabled. Second, this study aims to describe and interpret the ways in which, within each NPO, cultural identity positions and intercultural relationships emerge through and ideologies are implicated in interview discourses, and other broader discursive and socio-cultural practices. Third, this study strives to interrogate the ways in which the discourses, organizational practices, and contextual structures function ideologically in the construction and (re)production of unequal power relations between social and cultural groups. Fourth, endorsing CDA's political commitment to social change, this study is dedicated to promoting equitable and

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<sup>18</sup> A critical-dialectical concept of theory, according to Weiss and Wodak, focuses on “a criticism of scientific-theoretical results” and examines contradictions and considers an overall context with the aim of “true and instructional enlightenment about the historical and social situation” (2003a, p. 2).

<sup>19</sup> A phenomenological-hermeneutic approach of theory, based on Alfred Schutz's conception of Max Weber and Edmund Husserl, recognizes and formulates that theory formation in the social sciences is founded primarily on “everyday understanding” or “the common-sense knowledge of everyday life” (Weiss & Wodak, 2003a, p. 4).

humanitarian intercultural relationships that cross politicized terrains of power, history, difference, belonging, and identity.

Discourse, ideology, and power, Weiss and Wodak (2003a) contend, are the cornerstones of CDA. Fairclough (1995a) further argues that the relations between discourse, ideology, and power are opaque and are often unclear to those involved. Locke (2004) summarizes that in CDA discourses are “coloured by and productive of ideology” (p. 1) and also discourses “consolidate power and colonize human subjects through often covert position calls” (p. 2). Power in CDA is viewed as a process and outcome of the way in which particular discursive configurations privilege the status and positions of some over others. In a nutshell, Fairclough (1995a) describes CDA as aiming:

to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (p. 132-3).

CDA has been utilized in studying both *communication* and *culture*. For example, Tracy (2001) describes that discourse analysis within communication as “the *study of talk (or text) in context, where research reports uses excerpts and their analysis as the central means to make a scholarly argument*” (p. 726-727, emphasis in original). Situated in the (sub)field of intercultural communication, Grossberg (1984) articulates the use of discursive approaches to interpret how culture (conceived as signifying practices) is collapsed into or constituted in society (understood as structures of power and domination). For the purpose of this project, the CDA framework was applied to explore

the ways in which cultural practices constitute and are constituted in communication discourses in the context of cultural identity and relationship negotiation.

CDA has been widely utilized to study *identity* from discursive approaches (e.g., Barker & Galasinski, 2001). Stuart Hall (1996) argues, “identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse” (p. 4). Barker and Galasinski state that language and cultural practices are the resources that form the materials for personhood and group identity. It would be unimaginable to conceive the concept of identity without language and cultural practices. This project utilized the method of CDA to (a) understand how cultural identities in intercultural relationships are constituted and negotiated in public documents and interviews about experiences related to each NPO, and (b) interrogate how cultural identity and intercultural relationship negotiation occurs. These objectives were addressed by focusing on the particularized interplays between discursive practices, contextual and socio-cultural practices, ideological positions, status hierarchies, and implicated material conditions.

Van Dijk (2001) advocates, “CDA should be essentially diverse and multidisciplinary” (p. 96). Starting with its heterogeneous genesis, the engine of CDA lies in its openness and compatibility for interdisciplinary integration without being necessarily eclectic. Various approaches of CDA have been and continue to be developed such as linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis, semiotic analysis, conversational analysis, cultural-generic analysis, social-cognitive analysis, etc. (Fairclough, 1995b). Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that the different approaches of CDA can be categorized based on (a) different conceptualizations of the role of discourse in constituting the social

worlds, (b) different conceptions of the notion of ideology, and (c) different analytical tools.

For the purpose of this study, I drew on the work of van Dijk (e.g., Van Dijk, 1984, 1994, 2001; Van Dijk, Ting-Toomey, Smitherman, & Troutman, 1997) on socio-cognitive discourse analysis to examine interview discourses and public texts. Van Dijk's work on discourse is concerned broadly with analyzing the ways in which the social world and order is described and reflected in discursive texts produced by people as members of particular cultures or social groups in the course of social interaction (Condor & Antaki, 1997). In van Dijk's approach to CDA, social cognition (i.e., opinions, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and group knowledge) provides the link to analyze the relationships between discourse and ideology that are not direct and are framed in the processes of social, political, and cultural reproductions (Van Dijk, 1994, 1996, 1998). Van Dijk conceives ideology as "*the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group*" (1998, p. 8, emphasis in original) and argues that ideology has both social and cognitive functions. In this project, I conceive of "social cognition" as the social construction of knowledge entailing shared systems of strategies and structures that is expressed by group members. I relied on van Dijk's approach as a useful framework to examine through the lens of social cognition, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs that implicated particularized configurations of power and ideology.

Discourse across different approaches of CDA is generally understood as "a social practice that shapes the social world" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 18). Informed by a socio-cognitive view of discourse, I endorse the view that discourse not only is constituted by, but also constitutes subjective experiences and hierarchical social



positions. Discourse is a major means through which knowledge and social representations are acquired, shared, and confirmed. Discourse reveals systems of mental strategies and implicates contradictory structures and institutional processes as well as power relations and ideologies. Thus, the subjects' understandings of their identities are, in part, constructed, produced, and negotiated in discourses. For this study, this socio-cognitive view of discourse is particularly relevant because it considers interviews as a form of social interaction and communication as exemplified in van Dijk's studies on ethnic prejudice and everyday racism in discourse (1984, 1993).

For the goals of this project, the term *discourse* can be broadly conceptualized as a communication practice featuring social and cultural dimensions that encompasses three main parts. Van Dijk (1997) characterizes these as: (a) language use, (b) communication of beliefs, and (c) interaction in social situations. As CDA is figured in and premised upon the core concepts of discourse, power, history, and ideology (Weiss & Wodak, 2003a; Wodak, 2001), discourse in this study is understood to be configured and structured as well as to (re)produce ideologies, unequal power relations, historical conditions, contextual structures.

In this study, employing CDA as a method means relying on it as an analytical framework. For example, Fairclough (2001) proposes a model for using CDA as a method in critical social scientific research. The first step of his model is to focus on a social problem that has a semiotic or linguistic aspect. In the example provided on representations of change in the global economy, Fairclough first focuses his analysis on the social problem associated with representing and constructing the global capitalism as unchangeable and unquestionable. One of the problems with such a representation is that

it rendered invisible or excluded alternative ways of organizing international economic relations that might have less detrimental effects. The second step is to identify obstacles to be tackled, through analysis of a network of practices, the order of discourse, interactional analysis, interdiscursive analysis, and linguistic analysis. For example, in the same study on global economy, Fairclough found that the discourse of global capitalism was locked into the network of practices regarding national governments, and intergovernmental and government-sponsored international agencies. Such powerful networks presented one obstacle to tackling the problem of charting the representations of change in the global economy.

Fairclough's third step is to consider whether or not the social order (i.e., network of practices) in a sense requires or needs the problem. For example, Fairclough discovered that misrepresentations of the new global economy as inevitable legitimized part of the new social order and contributed to sustaining unequal power relations in the world trade. The fourth step is to identify possible ways past the obstacles. For example, in order to move beyond the obstacles, Fairclough introduced a new text called "capitalist globalization." This alternative text featured a different discourse that shifted the focus from the dominant to addressing difference and resistance. The last step is to reflect critically on the analysis interpreted in steps one to four by asking questions such as: how effective the analysis is as critique, whether or not the analysis contributes to social emancipation, and whether or not the analysis is compromised by its positioning in academic practices.

I drew on elements of both van Dijk's social-cognitive approach of CDA and Fairclough's five-step model to guide my analysis of interview discourses and public

texts. First, I relied on van Dijk's approach to attend to the opaque relations between discourse, context, power, and ideology through analyzing the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and socially constructed knowledge expressed by group members. In particular, van Dijk's approach was useful in attending to the social construction of knowledge between members of different social groups that had various status levels and cultural standpoints, because van Dijk considers "a group" in terms of shared knowledge, objectives, problems, and social representations, and/or associated with a social identity. Van Dijk also considers ideological dominance to take many forms and to occur in different situations that are not limited to dominant ideologies produced by dominant groups. Second, I drew on Fairclough's model and analytical steps to direct my attention to (a) issues of self-reflexivity, (b) to social realities that might be excluded in the dominant discourses, and (c) to the prospect of how the network of discursive practices might function together to sustain or maintain systems of domination.

### ***Self-Reflexivity***

As inspired by both Fairclough (2001) and Baker (2002), I reflected on my analysis by considering potential biases in my analysis. I asked myself questions such as: To what extent did my own cultural identity positioning influence my interpretation and analysis? To what extent did my positions as the researcher impact the interview processes as well as my analysis? What perspectives might be left out in my framing in this study? Who might benefit from my findings? How might my findings directly benefit the two NPOs that I focused on in this study? How could I make my findings more accessible to wider audiences outside academia such as members of the nonprofit

communities? In what ways could my findings contribute to promoting humanitarian and equitable intercultural relationships?

Considering that I relied on interview discourses as the primary source upon which to build knowledge, I also asked myself questions regarding my use of interview accounts to ensure the trustworthiness and accountability. Did I quote the participants' accounts in ways consistent with their sense of identities and organizational structure? When using direct quotes from the participants in the interview interactions, did I feature in good faith the consequentiality of the conversation interaction?

### **Data Collection Process**

#### ***Justification for Case Studies***

Using case studies is widely and commonly employed in research in NPOs (McNabb, 2008). Focusing on a case study has the strength of optimizing understanding because scholars not only concentrate on experiential knowledge in the case but also attend to a wide range of contextual influences (i.e., forces that are social, political, historical, economic, institutional, etc.) in understanding the particular case (Stake, 2005). Such strength of a case study is critical to meet the goals of this study for contextually contingent examinations of cultural identity and relationship negotiation.

Multiple case studies or a collective case study, Stake (2005) argues, are utilized for the goal of better understanding or better theorizing about a large collection of cases or a certain phenomenon through understanding several cases that share some common contexts. The case is a bounded yet complex system located and embedded in a multitude of contexts or backgrounds whether cultural, physical, historical, or social. When dealing with such thick complexity featuring multiple perspectives and realities, case researchers

unquestionably shoulder the burden of providing evidence and validity of their claims. Stake proposes the use of the procedure of “triangulation” to identify and collect multiple views through which the case can be seen.

In this study, two cases were selected both for their uniqueness and their similarities as social justice-oriented NPOs. The two cases were chosen not only because they both fit the objectives of this study but also because they welcomed me as a volunteer, observer, and researcher and granted me access for obtaining in-depth knowledge about them.

### ***Procedures***

I collected multiple perspectives on the organizations, cultural identities, and relationships. Specifically, I collected the following: (a) public texts and discourses featuring both archival and public materials regarding the two chosen nonprofit cases (e.g., brochures, printed websites, grant applications, board meeting agendas, etc.), (b) participant observations through volunteering at both NPOs (e.g., attending board meetings, participating in community outreach, holding workshops, and conducting an impact analysis project), and (c) qualitative in-depth interviews with selected respondents from three different status groups in each NPO. These included: 1) directors, managers, and coordinators; 2) volunteers and board members; and 3) clients/production employees served by each NPO. My analysis of the first two categories of data enabled me to better understand the histories, organizational structure, and goals of each NPO. The interview discourses served as the primary data for understanding and interrogating the identity of the NPO, cultural identity and relationship negotiation and production of hierarchies and ideologies. I also examined broader contextual forces such as cultural group histories,

organizational histories, political and government policies impacting the work of the organization in order to better understand the broader context and social order.

*Public Texts and Discourses:* I collected available and accessible public texts and discourses pertaining to both CPA and SEHW. For CPA, I collected different versions of its brochures that contained mission statements, web publications, and a volunteer application package. For SEHW, I gathered several grant applications between 1994 and 2008, various brochures, board meeting and board retreat agendas and minutes, web publications, and two teaching cases written about SEHW.

*Participant Observation:* Throughout my volunteering experiences at both organizations, I conducted participant observation of what I saw, heard, and experienced as well as made critical reflections of the people, events, and interactions in field notes. I jotted down brief notes during observations, and wrote up more detailed reflections at the end of the day. Fetterman (1989) defines participant observation as “participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance” (p. 45). As a volunteer, I both participated in and observed ongoing events in a professional or detached experiential style. In this style, I was not only concerned with jotting down and making mental notes of events of interest, but also concerned about the quality of relationships that I developed with the people with whom I collaborated as well as studied. In addition to several initial informal observations, I conducted consistent participant observation while volunteering at both organizations between July, 2009 and January, 2010. As a volunteer, I attended numerous events and functions at both NPOs to fulfill my designated role or as an invited guest.

To help guide my journaling after participating and observing in both NPOs, I adopted Emerson, Fretz and Shaw's (1995) procedures of "participating in order to write." Emerson, Fretz and Shaw offer three specific suggestions for fieldworkers to notice: (a) initial impressions, (b) key events or incidents, and (c) actions, interactions, and events that those in the setting experience and react to as "significant" or "important." For the purpose of this study, I first took note of my initial impressions that included: the look and feel of the locale (e.g., size, space, color, noise, and equipment in the physical setting), and the look and feel of the people in the locale (e.g., number, gender, race, appearance, dress, movement, language used, and feeling tone of the people). Second, I focused on observing and selecting key events or incidents regarding group memberships, cultural identities, and relational interactions that surprised or ran counter to my expectations. Third, I paid attention to actions, interactions, and events that secured the attention of the people in the setting such as what they talked about and with whom, how they identified themselves, how they addressed or identified others, and what they reacted to with strong emotional responses. At the end of each participant observation, I wrote up and reflected on the notes I had jotted down in the field.

With CPA, I volunteered a total of 48 hours, among which I had roughly 23 hours of participant observations based on face-to-face interactions with individuals affiliated with CPA (e.g., attending orientations and conducting community outreach). With SEHW, I volunteered a total of 58 hours, among which I had 38 hours of participant observations based on interactions with individuals associated with SEHW (e.g., attending meetings and events, and conducting focus groups). Though I documented impressions and key incidents, the nature of my participant observations focused

primarily on gaining knowledge of the NPOs as well as relationship building with informants that I came into contact with. I reviewed all my field notes (i.e., about 20 single-spaced notes for CPA and 30 single-spaced notes for SEHW) prior to analyzing the interview discourses.

*Interview Discourses:* Bearing in mind some of the ethnomethodological skepticism and postmodern critiques about traditional approaches to interviewing as an objective enterprise, I approached interviewing with certain awareness and sensitivities. Ethnomethodologists, Fontana (2002) argues, are skeptical of traditional assumptions of interviewing as a neutral or objective enterprise and are also doubtful of the interviewees as passive subjects in the interviewing interaction. From a postmodern perspective, certain key problems are associated with traditional assumptions about interviewing as Fontana (2002) summarizes: (a) the blurring boundaries between interviewers and interviewees; (b) the interviewer and respondent's collaborating in constructing joint narratives; (c) increasing concerns with issues of representation (i.e., Whose story are we telling and for what purpose?); (d) increasing concerns with the respondent's own understanding as s/he frames and represents her/his opinions; and (e) criticism of traditional patriarchal relations in interviewing. Overall, I concur with ethnomethodologists that interviews should be treated as "the collaborative production of contextually based accounts" in which social, contextual, historical, and institutional elements are brought into and used by both parties in the interviewing interaction (Fontana, 2002, p. 167).

In particular, I tried to be aware and sensitive to the following issues. First, I brought awareness to the asymmetrical power relations between the interviewer and the



interviewee that were not only dynamic but were contextually confined by the interview genre with its own particular norms (e.g., Kress & Fowler, 1979). With this awareness, I tried to balance the power differential whenever possible and I phrased my questions by taking into account the particular contexts and conditions of each NPO. Second, in the interviewing process, I (a) prioritized the sense-making methods and resources of my interviewees by positioning them as the experts and/or informants, (b) privileged how my interviewees assemble and managed their identities and memberships in construction of particular social worlds by asking them open-ended questions that allowed them to do so, and (c) tried to be sensitive to the collaborative nature of contextually-based interview accounts by avoiding leading or directive questions. Third, in the interview analysis stage, I drew on some of Baker's (2002) recommendations to analyze interview discourse by attending to (a) the consequentiality of the interview interaction through including the questions to which responses were given, (b) examination of interview responses as "accounts,"<sup>20</sup> treating interviews holistically and each response in its entirety and in context, (c) respondents' sense of identities, and (d) descriptions of communication in their relationships with others, and (e) social structure by taking in account respondents' positioning of selves and others, descriptions of resources and influence, and social worlds and social conditions.

## **Interviews**

### ***Recruitment of Participants***

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<sup>20</sup> The notion of account here can be characterized as "sense-making work through which participants engaged in explaining, attributing, justifying, describing, and otherwise finding possible sense or orderliness in the various events, people, places, and courses of action they talk about" (C. D. Baker, 2002, p. 781).

As informed by standpoint theory and as Howard and Geist's (1995) research on organizational members' discursive responses and ideological positioning during an organizational merger, I approached members' status positions in the organizational hierarchy as influential on their viewpoints and experiences. Thus, I interviewed participants who represented three primary perspectives on the NPO and three hierarchical levels within the organizational structure: (a) staff members in leadership or decision-making positions in each NPO including executive director, center coordinator, managers, and supervisors; (b) marginalized group members whom each NPO aimed to serve such as the low-income Hispanic women at SEHW and the Asian/Asian American women who were victims of domestic violence or related crimes at CPA; and (c) individuals who volunteered, were interns, and served on the board.

With respect to sample size, I relied on Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) criterion of reaching "interpretive competence" as a critical threshold for determining the specific number of interviews needed (p. 129). Drawing on Snow's (1980) three tests of "information sufficiency,"<sup>21</sup> Lindlof and Taylor argue that qualitative researchers need to sample persons or interviewees until they cease to be surprised by what they observe or they notice that the new data no longer add new features to their conceptual framework. Overall, I conducted a total of 32 interviews at which point I felt confident having reached interpretive competence in each NPO. In both NPOs, the interviewed staff and volunteering members such as volunteers, interns, and board members were recruited directly by me via emails and/or face-to-face invitations. In CPA, Kumico, center

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<sup>21</sup> Snow (1980) described three tests by which researchers can determine when to leave the field: (a) taken-for-grantedness (i.e., the researcher is no longer surprised by the participants' actions or meanings; (b) theoretical saturation (i.e., the researcher reaches a point where new data feed fewer new features into a conceptual framework); and (c) heightened confidence (i.e., the researcher is reassured that "the observations and findings are faithful to the empirical world under study" (p. 104).

coordinator, helped me to recruit the interviewed clients to honor their confidentiality and voluntary participation. In SEHW, Lucia, a program manager, helped me to recruit the interviewed production employees due to my in ability to speak Spanish.

### ***Interview Procedures***

Prior to conducting this research, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of New Mexico (see Appendix B). Before beginning any interviews, the participants were first informed of their voluntary participation, their rights to confidentiality, and the topics to be discussed. The interview data were collected after obtained informed consent from each participant (see Appendix C), including the three interviews where an interpreter translated and explained the consent form. Only with each participant's permission was her/his interview tape-recorded for the convenience of transcription and subsequent analysis. All interviews were conducted in public settings such as a conference room inside each of the NPOs, a coffee shop, and a restaurant. The one-time semi-structured interview ranged from 50 – 120 minutes. Specifically, each participant was asked general and open-ended questions regarding their experiences and views about the NPO. The interview questions addressed topics such as the participants' cultural identities, their experiences of negotiating different cultural identities, their conceptions of as well as experiences with intercultural relationships, and their views of the NPOs with which they were affiliated (see Appendix D). Respondents were asked to describe their cultural group identities, their relationships with individuals from the NPO, and what they said or did to negotiate their different cultural identities.

### *Participants at Center of Peace for Asians*

A total of 16 respondents from CPA participated in this study. Interviewees were: four staff (see Table 1), seven volunteering members including interns, volunteers, or members of the board of directors (see Table 2), and five clients served by CPA (see Table 3). Respondents offered their own details about age, length of time working in/with the NPO, U.S. citizenship status, income levels, and educational levels. Their ages ranged from 23-75 years of age. Their length of time involved with CPA ranged from six months to three years and six months.

The participating CPA staff's annual income levels ranged from less than \$10,000 to \$20,001-30,000. In terms of educational levels, one respondent had a Ph.D., two had a master's degree, and one had some graduate education. With respect to U.S. citizenship status, one of them was a U.S. citizen, one was a green card holder, and two were not U.S. citizens.

The participating volunteering members' annual income levels ranged from less than \$10,000 to more than \$50,000. In terms of educational levels, two respondents had a Ph.D., one had a master's degree, one had some graduate education, one had a bachelor's degree, and two had some college education. Regarding U.S. citizenship status, six of them were U.S. citizens and one was not.

The participating client's annual income levels ranged from less than \$10,000 to \$20,000. In terms of educational levels, one respondent had a master's degree, two had a bachelor's degree, and one had some college. With respect to U.S. citizenship status, two of them were green card holders, one was a U.S. citizen, and two were not.

### ***Participants at Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women***

A total of 16 respondents from SEHW participated in this study. Interviewees included: five staff (see Table 4); six volunteering members, such as volunteers and board of directors/members (see Table 5); and five production employees served by SEHW (see Table 6). Their ages ranged from 24-76 years of age. Their length of time involved in SEHW ranged from six months to fifteen years.

The participating SEHW staff's annual income levels ranged from \$30,001-40,000 to more than \$50,000. In terms of educational levels, two respondents had a master's degree, one had a bachelor's degree, and two had a high school diploma. With respect to U.S. citizenship status, all five of them were U.S. citizens.

The participating volunteers and board members' annual income levels ranged from less than \$10,000 to more than \$ 50,000. In terms of educational levels, two of them had a Ph.D., three had a master's degree, and one had some graduate education. Regarding U.S. citizenship status, five of them were U.S. citizens and one was a green card holder.

The participating production employees' annual income levels ranged from \$10,000 to \$30,000. In terms of educational levels, three of them had some collage and two had a high school diploma. With respect to U.S. citizenship status, two of them were U.S. citizens and three were not.

Three of the SEHW production women (i.e., Dora, Emily, and Greta) expressed their preference for a translator. These interviews were conducted with the assistance of a paid bilingual interpreter. The interpreter translated the interview questions I asked into

Spanish. The women answered in Spanish, which the interpreter then back-translated into English.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Overview of Analysis and Interpretation Procedures***

All 32 audio-taped interviews were transcribed. I transcribed 16 of the interviews. Two paid transcribers fluent in both English and Spanish transcribed the remainder.<sup>22</sup> Once all interviews were transcribed and double checked for accuracy by returning to the tape recordings to fill in any unclear portions of transcripts, I separated the interviews into two groups based on the two research sites, and began my analysis. I analyzed the interview data from each NPO separately to situate and take into account the unique contextual conditions facing each NPO. Before looking for any specific information, I first read through each transcript numerous times to gain familiarity. I further separated interview data from each research site into the three specified status groups representing the three primary perspectives and standpoints within each organization.

I organized my process of interpretation/analysis below based on the four proposed research questions. For each research question, I first selected out examples of discourses that reflected the key constructs such as constructions of the organization, avowals and ascriptions of group identities, etc. After completing the first-round of descriptive analysis, I went over my analysis the second time with self-reflexivity. In the second-round of analysis, I reflected critically on my analysis with the questions inspired by Fairclough (2001) and Baker (2002). For instance, I considered social realities that

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<sup>22</sup> I received a \$3000 grant from the Graduate Research Development (GRD) committee of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) at the University of New Mexico to help pay for English-Spanish interpreters and transcribers.

might be excluded from the dominant discourses that emerged and I attended to consequentiality of the interview interactions and discourses.

***RQ1 How Members of Three Status Groups Construct the NPO's Work and Identity***

To answer RQ1 regarding what discourses reveal about each NPO's work and identity, I analyzed how interview discourses from members of the three status groups (i.e., staff, board of directors/volunteers, and production employees) and organizational documents constructed each NPO's work and identity, I conducted a thematic analysis of interview responses starting with questions #1, #15, #17, and #18 in the interview guide, and then looked at all responses. I also analyzed themes embedded in available organizational materials related to goals, purposes, visions, and missions. And I looked to relevant field notes to inform my interpretation and analysis.

I began my analysis by identifying and selecting key words, phrases, or accounts related to the work of NPO (i.e., what it meant or represented, how it was understood, what it functioned to achieve) mentioned in the interview transcripts among members of each of the three status groups in each NPO separately. Within each status group, I interpreted dominant themes regarding conceptions of the NPO's identity. Second, after interpreting the dominant themes that constructed each NPO's identity within each status group, I looked across the emerged patterns among the three status groups in each of the two NPOs for consistencies and contradictions. Examining who was speaking to whom/about what enabled me to make inferences about status hierarchies within each NPO related to views of the organization and its work. Finally, where applicable, I looked across the two NPOs for noteworthy patterns of similarities or differences in reproducing hierarchies, increasing and constraining individual levels of agency,

encouraging/discouraging socio-economic mobility, and resisting or reproducing patriarchy.

### ***RQ2 Contextually Contingent Intersecting Cultural Identity Positions***

The second research question asked what discourses reveal about intersecting cultural identity positions. I started by examining responses to questions #5 through #10 in the interview guide. I also looked to relevant archival texts and entries of participant observation to inform my interpretation and analysis.

I began my analysis with attention to repetitive or frequent discourses about cultural identities mentioned in the interview transcripts among members of each of the three status groups in each of the two NPOs separately. Within each status group, I first identified dominant types of cultural identities mentioned such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, profession, organizational role, etc. Second, I looked for accounts implicating properties of cultural identity enactment such as salience, ascriptions, avowals, etc. Third, I looked for examples of intersecting cultural identities, such as being an Hispanic female staff member or an Asian female living with an abusive partner, that emerged in the participants' responses about their own and others' group identities.

After interpreting the dominant patterns of cultural identity discourses within each status group, I looked across the categories among the three different status groups in each of the two NPOs for consistencies and unique patterns. I noted similarities and differences in how members of the same cultural group (e.g., whites, Hispanics, and Asians) were positioned in different status levels within the organizational structure.



Finally, I looked across the two NPOs for noteworthy patterns of similarities or differences related to identity positioning.

### ***RQ3 Relational Dialectical Tensions and Negotiating Status Hierarchy***

To answer RQ3 regarding what discourse demonstrate with regard to dialectical tensions and negotiating relational hierarchies, I began by conducting thematic analysis of interview responses to question #2 through #4 and questions # 11 through #14 in the interview guide. I also examined organizational documents to inform my interpretation and analysis.

Regarding dialectical tensions that characterize relationship negotiation, I began by identifying and selecting key words, phrases, or accounts related to tensions featuring forces of push and pull mentioned in the interview transcripts among members of each of the three status groups in each of the two NPOs. After interpreting the dominant tensions within each status group, I looked across the emerged relational tensions for consistencies and contradictions to make inferences about relationship negotiation that crossed status levels, such as director-staff or staff-clients. I then named the tensions informed by but not limited to dialectics previously identified in past research such as autonomy/connection (Baxter, 1988, 1990), change/stability (Howard & Geist, 1995), expressiveness/protectiveness (Rawlins, 1983), and identify tensions such as collaboration/competition and consensus/command used by organization members in the context of organization mergers (Pepper & Larson, 2006).

Regarding hierarchy and the nature of status relationships, I began my analysis by identifying and selecting interview responses related to experiences of marginalization explicit and/or descriptions or implied norms or standards. Then, I looked for indicators

of status hierarchies implicated in group positioning in the identified experiences. For example, I identified any discursive patterns in which staff members positioned women served as victims, or women served positioned themselves as survivors, etc. Also, I examined responses to question #14 to see if/how status hierarchies were recognized and/or explicitly or implicitly negotiated.

#### ***RQ4 Discourse, Ideology, and Reproduction of Broader Social Order***

To answer RQ4 regarding the ideological implications of discourses as related to productivity, group relations and identities, and broader social order, I examined all interview responses where participants named and identified their systems of beliefs about the work of the NPO, the groups involved, and references to the role of contextual factors such as institutions, histories, social systems, and group positioning. I also examined organizational documents and reviewed my field notes.

I sought to uncover ideologies identified in past research such as color-blindness, whiteness, and meritocracy as well as particular ideologies that were unique to each NPO. Also, I considered possible social practices and social systems that sustained and (re)produced standards of productivity and ideologies such as individual meritocracy and abstract liberalism. Lastly, I added consideration of larger social orders such as white supremacy and patriarchy that were reproduced or kept intact.

#### **Researcher's Self-Reflexivity**

Grounded in my intention for this project to be socially relevant, I am called to consider how my assumptions and my cultural identity positions might have influenced my interpretation and analysis. The value of answering questions about self-reflexivity is that this move can potentially open up transformative spaces through making explicit

challenges and considering alternative framing. Overall, my intersecting cultural identities as an Asian/Taiwanese female researcher from working class background sojourning in the United States gave me both *insider* and *outsider* perspectives in analyzing the interview discourses in this study. For example, in analyzing discourses from CPA, I could identify and unpack more problematic discourses against Asians/Asian immigrants than problematic discourses confronting crime victims of domestic violence. In analyzing discourses from SEHW, I could relate and unpack more discourses dealing with lower socioeconomic positions than discourses related to color-blind racism against Mexicans/Hispanics. Also, my commitment to social justice as a researcher provided a lens of engagement to my interpretation and analysis. It has been a humbling experience trying to do justice to the discourses as well as pushing my analysis forward with attention to contextual structures.

The challenges of doing work with social justice-oriented nonprofits with a more critical perspective were manifested throughout the different stages of this dissertation. In the conceptualization stage, it took me quite some time to identify and establish relationships with both NPOs in this study. I felt challenged by the processes of establishing relationships with the NPOs in ways that did not just benefit me and my research. In the data collection stage, I struggled with wanting to be observant and unintrusive in the processes but needing to finish this dissertation in accordance with my academic timeline. In the analysis stage, I felt challenged by ensuring each interviewee's confidentiality. For example, there were instances where I struggled with framing and representing the discourses that some participants brought up without identifying them. For instance, one respondent declared her intention to share critical information with me

about the NPO in the service of this dissertation research and requested that the information appear in the dissertation, but not be shared with the NPO. Another shared personal history with me that the participant had not felt comfortable sharing with the NPO. At the conclusion of this dissertation, I am going to meet with representatives from both NPOs to share with them findings from this study, which challenges me to apply and contextualize my findings in ways that can have immediate utility for their work and maintain confidentiality. I have scheduled meetings with Sharon, the new executive director of CPA, on June 24, and with Carla, the president of the SEHW board, on June 25, and agreed to submit a report to Sandra at SEHW after the meeting.

## **CHAPTER 4: CENTER OF PEACE FOR ASIANS**

In this and the following chapter, I analyze case studies of two social justice-oriented nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and address my research questions of how intersecting cultural identity positions and intercultural relationship negotiation function in the context of each NPO. I begin both chapters by briefly setting the scene through contextualizing a version of each NPO as contingent on the archival texts and website materials that were accessible to me, describing my relationship with each NPO, as well as providing background on the establishment of the NPO. Then, I organize both chapters based on the discursive themes that emerged in interview responses and organizational documents and relate these themes to my research questions.

As described in Chapter 3, I interpreted discursive themes based on central constructs using critical discourse analysis in ways generally consistent with Van Dijk (1998) and as applied by Collier (2005a, 2009). I feature direct quotes or paraphrased ideas from the transcribed interview discourses to describe and situate the participants' experiences. I assigned pseudonyms to all the respondents to protect their confidentiality. Also, I described with substantial detail the organizations mentioned without actually naming them to maintain confidentiality for both NPOs examined in this dissertation.

### **Background on Center of Peace for Asians (CPA)**

#### ***Background of Establishing CPA***

Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) was initiated by three Asian women who saw the need for establishing an Asian-based agency that specifically worked with domestic violence victims (Personal communication from center coordinator, Kumico, November 24, 2009). Before it became an independent agency, CPA originally had been a project

funded by a local NPO under the pseudonym of Association for Asian Americans (AAA) that aimed to promote the diverse cultural customs, contribute to the better social well-being, and support the economic progress of Asian communities. AAA was sometimes referred to as the “parent association” of CPA. When I accessed CPA’s website in March 2008, CPA was described as “partially funded by” and “operated by” AAA. However, some members of AAA and some community residents of 30 years voiced concerns and felt uneasy about CPA’s explicit dealing with domestic violence. Kumico explained, at the time of CPA as a funded project under AAA, some community members, especially several males, thought that “Oh, now the Association is telling us how to discipline our wives or how to deal with our marital issues.” Out of respect for both “the readiness of the community” and “the already established relationships,” the three initiators applied for grants and worked on establishing CPA as an independent NPO.

CPA started as an independent NPO in August 2006 by the three founding members, Debra, Irene, and Mandy as well as Kumico. Mandy invited Kumico to become involved because of her training as a licensed mental health counselor. Debra, Irene, and Mandy spearheaded the grant writing and the initial establishment of CPA, whereas Kumico was partially involved during the initial establishment and became fully involved when the service-providing part began. Kumico explained that the four of them made a democratic decision among themselves to distribute their roles: Debra as executive director, Irene and Kumico as clinicians, and Mandy as administrative staff.

Kumico started doing some of the administrative work when they noticed that there was limited administrative progress with no brochures made. Then, Mandy left the agency at the end of June 2007. In the next fiscal year between July 2007 and June 2008,

Kumico remarked that she had to “pitch in all the time” for the survival of CPA because there were “no really significant planning” and no designation of organizational roles. In other words, Kumico started shouldering the running of CPA. By the beginning of 2009, Kumico became center coordinator. At the time of this project, Debra was still the executive director; Irene held her same position as a specialized clinician; while Kumico was the center coordinator who had given but postponed her notice to leave due to familial circumstances. The board of directors at CPA started a search for a new executive director at the end of 2009, and on March 25, 2010, I received a greeting email from Sharon that self-identified as the new executive director.

### ***Mission, Vision, and Values***

Overall, CPA is a registered NPO started in 2006 that aims to provide comprehensive and integrated social services to help both immigrant and non-immigrant Asians/Asian Americans and their families cope with various issues related to domestic violence and immigration. Throughout the years, CPA has maintained its identity as a clearinghouse for information and referrals through collaboration with both governmental and non-governmental social service providers. Also, CPA has always sought to be a community-based network center for immigrant and non-immigrant Asian populations. As a relatively newly-established NPO, CPA is still negotiating its organizational identity with respect to its mission, vision, and core values.

To help capture the purpose of CPA, I have identified below the available and accessible mission, vision, and value statements in (a) three versions of the agency’s brochures, (b) two versions of the agency’s webpage, and (c) an almost final executive director posting that the board sent out on November 24, 2009. The three versions of the

agency's brochures are postmarked October 2007, February 2009, and September 2009 respectively. The two versions of the agency's webpage were accessed in March 2008 and February 2010.

*Mission Statements:* The first stated mission for CPA emphasized the agency's purpose "to ensure the rights and well-being of all Asians and Asian American by providing culturally sensitive services in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, community based center." The same mission statement appeared in both the two earlier brochures and also in the webpage accessed in March 2008, except that the previous webpage used "all Asian Americans" instead of "all Asians and Asian Americans." In the document for executive director search, slightly different wordings were chosen to depict CPA as "a growing non-profit networking organization established in 2008" and described the target populations as "the immigrant and non-immigrant Asian Population." An entirely different mission statement appeared in the third brochure postmarked September 2009 that described CPA as "a place for Asian immigrants and their families to share their concerns, to learn about their own, and others' cultures, to build supportive networks, and to increase self-sufficiency."

*Vision:* Across the different documents that I have collected, I only found one instance of a clearly stated vision statement on CPA's homepage accessed in February 2010. The vision statement described "to live in a world where inclusiveness is valued and equal opportunity and justice exist for all."

*Values:* In terms of values, several themes were repeated across the documents. First, there was one statement that appeared in all six documents, "The center emphasizes family strength and unity as well as understanding American society and its culture." I



should note the caveat that in the job posting for the executive director “American society” was replaced by “mainstream values.” Second, there was another statement about CPA that appeared in five of the six documents, “...respects individual and cultural differences and does not discriminate based on race, ethnic background, religion, beliefs, or sexual orientation.” Third, the latest brochure and website homepages described CPA as valuing and promoting “different art forms as media for increasing personal and cultural self-understanding” and “the importance of personal knowledge and experience” in addition to “diverse family structures” and individual and cultural differences.

### ***Funding Sources***

CPA started in August 2006 with funding from a state-run Commission for Crime Victims program with funds from the Office of Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice. Across all the accessible brochures and webpage, the Commission was consistently listed as a partial funder. Besides the state-run Commission, CPA had received funding from various sources. First, on the homepage accessed in March 2008, CPA was described as partially funded by the Association for Asian Americans under which CPA was created. Second, in the brochure published in February 2009, a local casino was added as funding the responsible gambling program. Third, when I attended the volunteer orientation in February 2009, a state-wide tobacco disparities network was mentioned as one of the funders, which was also mentioned by one of the interviewees. Fourth, a local chapter of United Way was listed as a funder both in the latest brochure and on the latest homepage. Overall, it seems that CPA has had some consistent and short-term funding sources.

### ***Core Goals and Services***

Across the available organizational documents, the central goal of CPA has remained to provide comprehensive and integrated social services to help Asians/Asian Americans and their families to cope with: (a) immigration issues and immigrant rights, (b) cultural adaptation, (c) language skills, (d) family conflicts, and (e) parenting. The only difference across the brochures and webpage was that “language skills” was not included in the homepages in March 2008 and was revised to “language barriers” in the latest brochure in September 2009. To meet its goal, CPA has provided services such as: (a) outpatient counseling, (b) support groups, (c) play therapy, (d) case management in Asian languages, including interpretation, (e) assistance to secure housing, food, and clothing, (f) crisis intervention, (g) court advocacy and legal representation, (h) parenting classes, and (i) community education.

### ***Expansion of Goals and Services in September, 2009***

Besides services and programs for crime victims of Asian heritage, CPA later expanded its programs to address tobacco and problem gambling issues as printed on the agency’s latest brochure published in September 2009. One of the staff members remarked to me that the expansion was based on an identified linkage between (domestic) violence and gambling and/or tobacco consumption. The funding for the responsible gambling program came from a local casino, whereas the tobacco cessation counseling in Asian languages was provided by a local chapter of United Way. Both funding sources have expanded CPA’s capacity to include services of counseling and case management for compulsive Asian gamblers and tobacco users as well as tobacco use prevention for

Asian youth. Also, telephone lines in seven languages were added for interested and needed community residents and potential clients.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Human Resources***

The operation of CPA as a registered NPO is structured around a board of directors, staff members, interns, and volunteers to serve their Asian and Asian American clients. At the time of this project, there were a total of 8 board members, 6 staff members including the executive director and center coordinator, 4 interns, and 27 volunteers. The board was comprised mainly of university professors and community partners such as the president of AAA and the director of a church-based center that promoted family life.<sup>24</sup> The staff was composed of six females with the majority having counseling or social work backgrounds. I met five of them except for Debra, the executive director. When Mandy, one of the establishing members, left CPA, Rachana was brought in as project coordinator because of her previous experience in running an agency for domestic maids in India. Jane was hired in 2008 as a counselor to meet the increased counseling needs from a growing number of clients. Megan was promoted to a part-time staff in 2009 after completing her one-year internship with CPA. The interns and volunteers were mainly university and college students. I interacted with two of the interns during trainings and doing community outreach. As of October 2009, the volunteers were listed with the following linguistic specialties: Chinese/Mandarin (n=9), Japanese (n=5), Indian (n=5), Korean (n=1), Vietnamese (n=5), and Filipino (n=1).

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<sup>23</sup> The seven available languages in alphabetic order are Chinese (Mandarin & Cantonese); Filipino (Tagalog & Visayan); Indian (Hindi & Bengali); Japanese; Korean; Thai; and Vietnamese.

<sup>24</sup> Megan, one of the staff members, emailed me the information regarding the board of directors upon my request on October 9, 2009.

With respect to the clients, I learned three things about them during my volunteer orientation on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 with Rachana, and my community outreach orientation with Kumico on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009. First, all the clients served were first generation immigrants. Second, approximately 80% of the clients were crime victims. Third, roughly 80% of them were females. While CPA is not limited to dealing with domestic violence issues, working with female crime victims appears to be a priority of CPA. In terms of organizational partners in the Asian communities, there were a total of eleven Asian groups<sup>25</sup> within the state that were affiliated and linked with CPA on its website such as Chinese schools, and Vietnamese temples.

### **My Relationship with CPA**

My relationship with CPA started with an informal introduction to one of the staff members, Rachana. Prior to that, I first heard about CPA at an international festival where I received a volunteer application package from whom I later recognized to be Kumico. Between January 2009 and January 2010, I volunteered a total of 48 hours. As a volunteer, I attended orientations and participated in community outreach to nail shops and restaurants run by Asians. Also, I helped edit and offer suggestions on a chapter of a manual on domestic violence in Asian communities for service-providers written by one staff member. In terms of offering my communication skills, I conducted a mock presentation and training with four staff members on conflict management that had been offered as a life skill workshop to interested clients and community members. Also, I was invited to facilitate one family mediation session regarding custodial arrangement where two counselors and one attorney were present to offer their perspectives and legal advice.

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<sup>25</sup> The Asian and Polynesian groups that were affiliated with CPA included Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Indian (East), Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Tahitian, Thai, and Vietnamese.

Throughout my volunteering, I primarily interacted with the staff and two of the interns, Dung and George, with whom I conducted community outreach. My only contact with clients was the invited family mediation session. In terms of contact with the board of directors, I never met or interacted with them as a volunteer. At CPA, it was not customary for volunteers to take part in board meetings even though I did attend one board meeting at AAA with Rachana as representatives of CPA. In that board meeting, one of the most anticipated events was the introduction of a newly-appointed FBI Special Agent who was repeatedly ascribed to be the first Asian female FBI agent in the city.

Throughout my time with CPA, I found myself calling on Kumico, Rachana, Megan, and George, in particular, to help me achieve my goals. Kumico reminded me to decide for myself what I wanted to do specifically as a volunteer since she knew that I was a doctoral student. I also felt I could relate to Kumico as a Japanese woman living in the United States. I felt connected to Rachana as we are both Asian, women, and academicians who believe in investing in and working with communities. Without Rachana's introduction, this project would not have been possible. I regarded Megan as a kindred spirit stemming from her passion and commitment to advocacy for Asian communities and as a mixed-raced individual living in multiple cultural worlds. Megan was also the first volunteer that I met at CPA. George was the only person from CPA with whom I occasionally socialized and with whom I felt comfortable to ask for information or to make requests.

Due to my limited interactions with board members, volunteers, and clients in CPA, I relied greatly on the staff to serve as bridges that assisted me in completing this project. Megan helped me with gaining access to contact information for the board

members and volunteers. Kumico helped me with recruiting and gaining permission of the clients to conduct interviews, to honor confidentiality and clients' voluntary participation.

### **How Members of Three Status Groups Construct CPA's Work and Identity**

The first research question asks how interview discourses from members of the three status groups (i.e., staff, board members/interns/volunteers, and clients) and organizational documents construct CPA's work and identity. The results indicate that members of the three status groups constructed somewhat divergent identifications for CPA with different emphases based on their contingent and role-related understandings of CPA. By no means am I suggesting or implying that all members within each of the status groups will have similar experiences with the center. All the identified discursive themes were patterns of experiences voiced by a majority in each status group. The following are the identified discursive themes that emerged: (a) staff members emphasized Asian-ness, client-based services, and advocacy when discussing CPA; (b) board members/interns/volunteers constructed CPA through Asian-ness, helping people in need, and infancy of the organization; (c) clients spoke about CPA in terms of helping people to overcome difficulties, offering dependable care, and providing free services; and (d) organizational documents constructed CPA as a service-providing agency for Asians and Asian immigrant families.

#### ***Staff Members***

Participating staff predominantly constructed CPA as an Asian-based and client-centered advocacy agency that prioritized providing social services to underserved Asian clients. The discursive themes related to the interviewed staff's construction of CPA

were: (a) Asian-ness, (b) client-based services, and (c) advocacy and empowerment.

*Asian-ness:* Participating staff's discourses constructed CPA as a much needed Asian-centered and Asian-serving agency for those Asians whose rights and needs were often left unmet due to language barriers and/or cultural differences. The language barriers referred to the underserved Asians' limited English language competency and their inability to understand and navigate the dominant social systems (e.g., legal, educational, and governmental). The cultural differences referred to the differing values and beliefs between the dominant U.S. cultures and the underserved Asians' heritage cultures that hindered them from having their rights and needs met. To the staff, the existence of CPA was well-justified and deemed important. Kumico, the center coordinator, described the CPA as "the only Asian agency" within the state, and expressed the need for an agency like CPA below:

Definitely Asians here in this state are very a limited number and underserved. And they are not getting their rights fulfilled, and they are even not knowing their rights either. Therefore, when Asian women, or males, or family members, or anybody who are not—who has a language barrier or cultural barrier and so on—get into difficulties, an agency like this is so much help.

Asian-ness was also expressed in terms of a shared identity as Asians between the staff and the clients. This enabled the staff to better assist and serve the clients whose languages and cultures the staff could understand. Jane explained below how her Asian-ness enabled her to better serve her clients:

The client had an experience with a non-Asian counselor [outside of CPA], because non-Asians have different mindsets, which is difficult from the Asian perspective. I realize this from the clients. They feel that we are, in a way, on their side, because we are more like them than their American counselors.

Since CPA is an Asian-based agency, the staff needed to define in their daily running of the agency what constitutes their "Asian" clientele. In other words, "How

Asian do Asians have to be?” to qualify them to receive services from CPA, is a key question as Megan once asked of Kumico. To CPA, “Asian” was constructed based on the geographical concept of “Asia.” I interpreted this from the contestation over the construct of Asian-ness raised by Rachana outlined below. Rachana’s response to my question about how CPA served particular groups of Asians such as Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese is illustrative of her critique of geographically-bound understandings of Asian-ness.

Because Asian is also Middle East and is also a lot of other things that are part of Russia or Soviet Union. Asia is also Afghanistan. Here you can go up to what? That was missing because I think it was a bit of Orientalism going on.

As a self-identified quarter Asian, Megan understood the criteria for CPA’s clientele to be “It’s more like the (Asian) immigrant or from the family of immigrant,” which underscored the significance of having emigrated from Asia.

Overall, the interviewed staff members shared the consensus of CPA as an Asian-based and Asian-serving NPO for underserved Asians even though they seemed to have different conceptions of what ought to constitute CPA’s Asian-ness. Enabled by CPA’s Asian-ness, self-identified Asians that occupied both similar and different locations were brought together in CPA. However, the differences underneath the Asian-ness, though surfaced, were not really dealt with. In practice, the services that CPA provided such as counseling and case management in Asian languages, catered to Asian immigrants who recently emigrated from certain parts of Asia and spoke limited English. So, as an Asian-based and Asian-serving NPO, CPA really served particular groups of Asians.

*Client-based Services:* The majority of the staff consistently referred to the individuals and families who received services from CPA as their “clients” and depicted



CPA as a client-based and service-oriented agency. The usage of the word, client(s), constructed and positioned CPA predominantly as a service-providing agency that (a) either provided services such as case management, counseling, and programs dealing with domestic violence, responsible gambling, and tobacco cessation, or (b) referrals to other agencies that served as better service-providers. By positioning the people served as their clients, the staff members constructed a service-providing identity for CPA that focused and limited their energy to help the clients gain access to or obtain services they needed. Also, the ascribed service-providing identity enabled the counseling staff to justify the prioritizing of service-providing as the primary goal of CPA. Moreover, from the positions as trained and licensed counselors, the counseling staff most likely preferred working with clients in ways that allowed them to best utilize their training. The comments from Kumico below were exemplary of that preference:

Looking back to the initial stage of the agency, we could pay so much more attention to each client. Now I tried to take only clients who cannot speak English but Japanese. And I love working with clients...Other things I don't mind as much as service toward clients. Towards clients I have high expectations.

Among all the services that CPA could provide, domestic violence was the most salient and most frequently talked about topic as informed by the genesis of CPA. The tobacco cessation program was commented on only once by Kumico and the gambling program was brought up once by Megan. Case management was another frequently brought up theme. The staff adopted a case management system to serve the clients by assigning case managers and having weekly meetings to debrief and talk about cases. I found the staff members who considered themselves service-providers to be extremely committed and driven. Megan's example of her taking one client to each and every single Income Support division in the city, because she was determined to get Medicaid for her

client, was illustrative of that dedicated commitment to serve the clients. In fact, Megan herself did not even have medical coverage at that time. Megan remarked what was going through her mind was simply, “She needed her medical. I mean you have to. I felt bad for her.” The following comments from Rachana also supported that dedication to serve clients. Rachana, who described the dominant approach adopted by CPA as “putting on a bandage and then do nothing else,” stated that “Their case management is good. Their heart is in the right place.”

The difference in frequency of use of the word, client(s), among staff with a counseling or social work background (i.e., Kumico, Jane, and Megan) and staff specializing in other areas (i.e., Rachana) is noteworthy. The word, client(s), was used a total of 101 times by the four staff members in the interviews: 42 times by Kumico, 42 times by Megan, 16 times by Jane, and just once by Rachana. Grounded in the word, client(s), the approach adopted by CPA to fulfill its mission and vision became filtered through it. On the other hand, Rachana, only used the word client once. She had a different approach to her relationships with the women served that she expressed to me was apparently not accepted by her colleagues. She responded to a question about her relationships with the women served whom she referred to as mail-order brides below.

I don't think it's marriage because I just don't think it is. It is trafficking, so once we have these women now, there is some kind of proof. And I don't like a Freudian type of one-on-one counseling expert interpreting your words. It's because that for me is very, very colonial. I prefer consciousness-raising. I am very political. I am a feminist. So, you see I can never get along with them [the other staff].

By constructing CPA as a service-providing agency, the staff members seemed to implicate relatively short-term and service-oriented relationships with the clients that were professional and somewhat formal. Also, the notion of providing the clients with

something they needed but could not access themselves seemed to place the staff in higher status positions than their clients. Given CPA's vision of "a world where inclusiveness is valued and equal opportunity and justice exist for all," it is important to raise and address questions about what is missing and the consequences of positioning CPA as a predominantly service-providing agency in trying to fulfill that vision.

*Advocacy and Empowerment:* In the nonprofit sector, advocacy can be understood as "action taken in support of a cause or an idea" (Worth, 2009, p. 332). Contextualized within CPA's goals of supporting Asian/Asian American individuals and their families, all four staff members expressed their desires to act as advocates for or promote some types of positive change in the clients and/or in the communities. Their views validated my original ascription of CPA as a social justice-oriented NPO. Nonetheless, the forms of advocacy discussed were divergent and grounded in each of the staff's roles, experiences, and assumptions. Kumico, the center coordinator of CPA, constructed a goal for the agency to represent and promote the needs and rights of Asian communities in general as shown below:

Working here [at CPA] definitely I am very much a spokesperson of the Asian community in general: how much they are underserved and get in trouble not knowing law, and therefore some of the importance-ness of being involved. So definitely I'm defensive toward protecting the rights of the Asian community in general.

When speaking as counselors, both Kumico and Jane depicted an advocacy agenda in terms of helping clients to develop or gain new skills. Kumico stated, "When a client is ready, then let the client to take a little bit of risk in an uncomfortable zone, and get the skills." Jane explained, "My purpose is for clients to learn new things, new ideas, new perspectives, and new skills." Megan, speaking as a case manager, constructed her view

of advocacy in terms of ensuring that the clients were treated fairly and having their rights fulfilled in the legal and social systems as illustrated below:

I guess I do more of the advocacy at the individual level, but we also kinda do it more whenever I call the district court or local court always try to get interpreter, and they say, 'We don't give interpreters for witnesses.' And I go, 'What do you mean you don't give interpreters for witnesses?' So I always have to fight with them.

Rachana, who transitioned from the project coordinator, then outreach specialist, to the researcher for the agency, constructed empowerment as a key issue for the agency to empower the women who came to the center. Rachana, based on her own research with domestic maids in India, believed that "a good way of empowering people is when I do performative arts." She also deconstructed why she believed empowerment was not happening at CPA below:

What should happen is these women should be together in a consciousness-raising group is why they are in this situation because it is totally connected to economic situation, to globalization, to identity, and all of that. You see I am a theoretician. I will just never get along with them [the other staff].

While the four staff members had different conceptions of CPA as an advocacy and empowerment organization, the goal of advocating for and empowering the underserved Asians and promoting positive change was consistent across the staff members. Even though the staff all intended for CPA to be an advocacy organization, their intentions, however, did not necessarily translate into concrete acts of advocacy for the underserved Asians. CPA was at best an advocacy agency at the individual level for a selective number of Asian immigrants. Pelton and Bazink (2006) argue that it is necessary for NPO's to initiate and support public policy advocacy regardless if they are entering the public policy realm or are dedicated to advocacy causes. At least, Pelton and Bazink contend that the NPO's must be aware of the public and/or policy environments in which

the NPO's are operating. Thus, I argue, for CPA to strengthen its advocacy agenda for underserved Asian immigrants, it is important to take into account the global conditions that brought those Asians to the United States as well as the structural conditions that enable and constrain their lives here.

### ***Board Members/Interns/Volunteers***

The volunteering board members, interns, and volunteers in this study constructed CPA as a new agency that catered to Asians in need of help and services. I should note that I placed board members, interns, and volunteers all in this group because they all volunteered their time, resources, and experiences in some form and generally occupied a more peripheral space in terms of their involvement in CPA. However, considering the organizational structure of CPA, board members, interns, and volunteers could also be further divided into their own groups if I could have interviewed more people. In terms of their functionality, the board members served as a governing body to CPA, while the interns and volunteers played various roles as determined by Kumico such as interpreters, administrative assistants, and assistants to the case managers. The experiences of the respondents within this status group were more divergent compared with the other two groups; however, there were still identifiable themes that emerged. The discursive themes related to the construction of CPA among the volunteering board members, interns, and volunteers were: (a) Asian-ness, (b) helping people in need, and (c) infancy of the organization.

*Asian-ness:* To the majority of the volunteering board members, interns, and volunteers, CPA was an Asian-run and Asian-centered agency that catered to the different ethnic groups under the umbrella term of Asian. Three of the seven interviewees

even went further to define CPA as not just for Asians but for Asian immigrants with the goals “to help Asian immigrants with any kind of issue” as George named it. While CPA was constructed as an agency for Asians, two among the seven the participants also made note of the fact that CPA was not able to serve all groups of Asians or have representations from all groups. Adan in particular articulated below the meaningfulness of having a representation of his own group, a Filipino, on the Board of Directors:

There’s one of the board members. She is from the Philippines, so there was an instant connection there. So I felt like her presence was a little important... You just felt it. That we can cater to Filipinos in particular because we’re there alongside with the Japanese, like Kumico, and this Chinese lady from Singapore. There are different people that can cater to different kinds of Asian people, but at the same token I kinda felt a membership within the organization.

Also, when asked about their experiences with CPA, respondents tended to remark about specific experiences working with clients from their own communities such as the Vietnamese, Japanese, and Chinese. While CPA was supposed to be for all Asian groups, certain groups had higher representation or interactions with the center.

According to the majority of the respondents within this status group, the Asian-ness of CPA functioned as a point of connection, a comfort, or an opportunity to network with members of other Asian groups. Some of them even took comfort in and/or considered it a necessity for CPA to be run by Asians as Lanh commented: “If you are not Asian, how can you work for CPA? If you are American or Mexican, you wouldn’t work for CPA. You don’t know the tradition, and you don’t know anything about being Asian.” At the time of this project, CPA was run by all Asians. Overall, the comment from Iago below summed up the overarching understanding of CPA among the participants across this status group:

I think it's a wonderful organization to help Asian people specifically. You know there are many organizations that help Hispanic people, you know, but not Oriental people. And also Asian people would feel more comfortable going to an Asian organization than other organizations.

It appeared that the volunteers in this status group were drawn to CPA because it was an Asian-run agency that catered to Asians just like them in the context where Asians were not only the minorities but also relatively unnoticeable. Unlike the staff, they came to CPA for connecting and networking with other Asians instead of seeing themselves as serving the underserved Asians. However, the services provided by CPA suggested minimum consideration of the needs and strengths of the volunteering members. As a result, the majority of the 27 volunteers were inactive.

*Helping Asian People in Need:* The board members, interns, and volunteers all used the word “help” (i.e., to help, helping, or get help) in describing CPA as an organization that aimed to help Asian people who were in need of assistance. Both George and Iago used the word “to help” in the excerpts presented earlier when describing the goal(s) of CPA. So did Adan and Dung. “The goal is to cater to the Asian people in need,” said Adan, and “Pretty much helping people with what they need help with,” said Dung. Furthermore, several people highlighted how their desire to get involved in CPA and help fellow Asians was rooted in their own personal experiences. Speaking as a self-identified domestic violence survivor, Ami discussed her desire to help others who may be struggling with similar situations with domestic violence as she said, “I knew I wanted to help.” Speaking as a Vietnamese resident, Lanh expressed his desire of helping other Vietnamese, “Because I think there are many Vietnamese living in this state, so I also decide to help them. In the brochure it says that there are about 3,000 Vietnamese living here.” Speaking as a first-generation immigrant, Adan shared in the

following excerpt his rationale for getting involved in an agency like CPA that aimed to help Asian immigrants:

So to me this is one of the prime factors that I volunteer so that I could maybe assist some new immigrants that have just arrived here looking for some resources or just asking what's it's like getting a job, or how to fill out an application form. You know, just simple things that nobody taught you and I had to learn everything on my own.

When examining closely the types of help or assistance that the majority of the respondents discussed in the context of CPA, their responses seemed to construct CPA as specifically catered to Asian immigrants. For examples, services such as language interpretation, filling out forms, and making phone calls for clients were particularly relevant for first-generation immigrants. In fact, all the clients at CPA during this project were first-generation immigrants. Speaking both as an academician researching Asian immigrants in the United States and as first-generation immigrant from Bangladesh, Zach discussed both issues that brought or could bring Asian immigrant families to CPA and also issues with which he saw CPA could help immigrants navigate. Zach emphasized issues such as English language acquisition, cultural adaptation, social isolation, and identity conflicts between first-generation immigrant parents and second-generation immigrant children. In particular, Zach stressed how CPA could help those who felt isolated to navigate that challenge:

I think that's the thing we need to become very aware of, because these are the people who often feel that they are in no man's land, they are nowhere, they don't belong anywhere. But that's not the case. So I think the Center of Peace for Asians can help these people to navigate through this challenging process.

In order to help Asian people in need, CPA was constructed by members of this status group as needing to expand its services. Members of this group in general were quick to offer suggestions and had a wide range of ideas on additional services and



programs for CPA to better meet its goal of helping Asian people in need. Their responses suggested that helping Asian people in need meant going beyond resolving the immediate and initial problems that brought Asians to CPA. As Iago put it, “To recover from it (the problem) and go beyond.” Collectively, respondents suggested an eclectic list of programs and services for CPA to take on, in addition to its existing focus on domestic violence, responsible gambling, and tobacco cessation, such as: mental health services, scholarship programs for Asians, programs for child development, practical skill trainings, information sessions on immigration, programs on economic development, better outreach programs, and more legal services. Each respondent seemed to recommend programs and services perceived as important from their own social positions. For instance, Zach was trained in family studies and suggested a child development center. Adan, a graduate student, suggested scholarship programs.

To the volunteering board members/interns/volunteers, their desires to help Asian people in need were personal instead of professional. Korngold, Voudouris, and Griffiths (2006) find volunteer movements to be powered by “a passion to make things better” (p. 249). The volunteers at CPA seemed to want to help Asian people who were like them or who had similar experiences to them as Asian immigrants in the United States. Based on that orientation, their suggestions for expanding services might be an indicator of their own unmet needs or unheard voices at CPA. However, CPA’s not galvanizing the full force of their volunteers was not unique. Korngold et al. (2006) argue that volunteers continue to be a highly underused resource in the nonprofit sector.

*Infancy of the Organization:* To the members of this status group, CPA was a new agency. Zach called CPA as an organization “in its infancy stage.” The newness of CPA

was constructed by members of this status group based on (a) number of people involved, (b) number of clients served, (c) reputation in the large communities, (d) available and accessible funding, and (e) specific procedures in place for processes such as election of board members. According to members of this status group, CPA was a new agency that had limited people involved, served a small number of clients, was not quite known in the community, was under-funded, and needed a stronger organizational structure. The following excerpt from Adan seemed to summarize the prevailing feeling among members of this status group:

I don't think they (CPA) have enough money to really be at the level that's really known in the community. So only a few people know about it and there are only a few Asian people that they cater to....And they don't have enough volunteers to cover each group.

Regarding the issue of not having enough volunteers, as I mentioned earlier, there were a total of 27 volunteers listed on the excel spreadsheet that Megan emailed me. When I emailed each of them individually an invitation to participate in this study, I received four email responses explaining that they would like to help but had not done anything with CPA such as: "Unfortunately, I have not done anything related to the Center of Peace for Asians although my name is on the list." In her interview, Kumico acknowledged that she tried but probably did not fully utilize the potential of the volunteers and interns. In the midst of grant deadlines and court hearings for clients, following-up with volunteers and interns about their tasks was one of many tasks on "Kumico's priority list." Through my interviews, I personally learned much more detail about activities of CPA that I hadn't known when I was a volunteer. As members of this status group were not as involved in the daily operation of the agency, their overall

construction of CPA seemed specific to their peripheral positions in CPA.

### *Clients*

The participating clients constructed CPA as a caring and dependable agency that provided free services to help people to overcome difficulties. The discursive themes related to the construction of CPA among the clients were: (a) helping people to overcome difficulties, (b) offering dependable care, and (c) providing free services.

*Helping People to Overcome Difficulties:* To the clients, CPA was a center that could “help people to overcome difficult times” as Yuru put it, or to help “the not lucky people” as Thi stated. While Sabal was the only person that did specify CPA as a center to “help all Asians in ways it can”, I did not find “Asian-ness” to be a meaningful theme in the descriptions of the interviewed clients. What seemed meaningful to the people in this group was that some Asian individuals from CPA helped them when they were struggling and having difficulties. Yuru described in the following excerpt what it meant to receive services from CPA after she had just arrived in the United States and found herself in a difficult situation:

When a person is having difficulty, that difficulty might have crashed the person and then the person gives up on him/herself and lets his/her life deteriorate. Right now I am at least better than before. Difficulty can crash or knock down a person. At that time, I was not crashed because of the help from the Center. Without the Center, I might have gone back to China. I am still here today learning because of the help from the Center. If I have difficulty again in the future, I will still rely on the Center.

All the interviewees in this group were referred to CPA because of difficult situations. Though I specifically told each of them at the beginning of their interviews that I did not need to know any details about their particular situations, they consistently spoke about how difficult their situations were for them and how much they needed the

services from CPA. For example, Fabia spoke about hiding her grief over her deceased daughter before starting counseling with Kumico, “When nobody was around me, I cried out loud at that time.” Sabal talked about her helplessness before someone called CPA with her, “I didn’t know where I could get help and how I could get help.” It was their difficulties that brought them to CPA, but they were all referred to CPA by others because they were Asian. In Thi’s case, she originally contacted another agency to help with her green card application and was referred to CPA as she explained:

Before I stay here [in a rental apartment], I reviewed the paperwork for green card and I called Mary and she told me to call the Center for Peace for Asians. She said that they would help me. Later I met Kumico, Jane, and Megan.

Though all the interviewed clients referred to CPA as an Asian-based agency, the Asian-ness of the agency did not seem as meaningful as it was to CPA staff, such as Kumico and Jane. Language was mentioned; Tricia commented, “There was some Japanese lady, Kumico, very easy to communicate with in the same language, including very specific details of things.”

*Dependable Care:* The participating clients all commented positively on the services they received from the staff member(s) at CPA in one way or another. In particular, the consistent remarks about how caring and dependable the staff were functioned to construct CPA as a reliable agency for Asians. All the participants used similar or comparable sentences such as “She is always there” said both Fabia and Sabal, “I think I can count on them” stated Fabia, “Nobody can help me except for the Center of Peace for Asians that help me” Thi commented, “Every time something happens I always ask her,” Tricia remarked, and “It was there for me whenever nobody else was. It actually

saved my life so to speak” said Sabal. To the responding clients, CPA seemed to be an agency that had been and always would be there for them.

The dependable care provided by CPA was communicated in another sense in terms of the staffs and interns’ commitment and capability to do all things asked as Thi commented:

When I tell them something, they help me with everything, the 1<sup>st</sup> thing, 2<sup>nd</sup> thing, and 3<sup>rd</sup> thing. And they look like a family. The day I gave birth to the baby Megan, Jane, and Kumico came and helped me. The interpreter [Dung] came with me and I delivered the baby.

Thi’s remark suggested that the staff were quick to respond to emergencies such as delivering a baby. In still another sense, the staff and involved interns were constructed as providing very effective advice that helped solve the difficulties efficiently as Yuru put it:

They told you a shortcut when you were in your deepest trouble, a way to handle your trouble. They advised you and provided you with very effective assistance. This help was very good. It was effective and much needed. They were like the light at the end of the tunnel. As long as you kept walking toward the light, you would resolve the problem.

*Free Services:* For the majority of the participating clients, receiving the services free of charge was critical for them to be able to access the services in the first place. As Sabal said, “I don’t have to pay a penny. I have been seeing them for over one year but I don’t have to pay a penny.” Tricia echoed, “First of all, they don’t cost me anything at all... Yes, it’s free. It’s very important to my situation.” Yuru also was appreciative of the free services. However, she grew uneasy about receiving all the free services for an extended period of time such as weekly counseling services and housing for both her daughter and herself. In the end, she decided to go back to the abusive relationship that brought her to CPA. To Yuru, receiving the services for free was somehow justifiable

only when she was in her deepest trouble. After she moved back to live with her husband, she stopped receiving services from CPA as she explained below:

Afterwards I told Jane that, ‘I am going back to live there.’ I said, ‘Because I am a little worried that I know that counseling is very expensive. I am worried that they are going to give me a big bill that I cannot afford.’ Also, I was worried about several things. First, I knew the hourly fee for counseling was pricey. Also, at the time in my deepest trouble I did not have any work. So they could understand that I could not afford the bill. However, now I come back to live here and I have some income even though it’s not a lot of money. So I am worried that they might think that I come back here and I still don’t pay. So, I feel that might be considered greedy. So I am worried that people might consider me greedy and want to get free services from them. I am afraid of that feeling.

### ***Organizational Documents***

Across the organizational documents, CPA was constructed as a service-providing agency for Asian and Asian immigrant families. The consistently repeated words across the organizational documents were: “social services,” “Asian and Asian Americans,” “immigrant Asian population,” and “family/families.” The focus on issues such as domestic violence, tobacco, and gambling were indirectly named and identified in the programs and service provided.

### ***CPA from Three Status Positions and Organizational Documents***

Overall, the divergent themes that emerged from the three status groups illustrate how the participants’ understandings of the agency were closely tied to their positions at CPA. To the staff members, CPA was an advocacy NPO at the individual level for the underserved Asian clients. To the board members/interns/volunteers, CPA was a new organization for Asian immigrants in need. To the clients, CPA was a caring and dependable organization that provided free services to people in difficult situations.

When juxtaposing all four constructions of CPA, several interpretations can be advanced. First, the public discourse of CPA was more inclusive and broader than the

participants' constructions with a particularized focus on clients and/or crime victims. Second, staff members seemed positioned above the clients with more resources, skills, and knowledge through words such as "providing" and "advocating and empowering" by the staff and "depended on" by the clients. Third, the board members/volunteers/interns not only were underused resources but also were not fully informed about the public environments in which CPA were operating regarding issues of domestic violence, gambling, and tobacco. Fourth, the emerged themes positioned CPA in a reactive mode of short-term, immediate crisis management with little long-term strategic planning related to prevention of abuse and gambling, except for an Asian youth tobacco use prevention program that I learned about from the website.

### **Contextually Contingent Intersecting Cultural Identity Positions**

The second research question asks what interview responses from individuals working within the Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) reveal about intersecting cultural identity positions. I found questions about cultural identities as group memberships to be the most challenging portion of the interview processes, especially when there were language barriers and when the participants were not familiar with the concept of identity. I often tried to ask those questions in different ways by reframing the questions through particular individuals with whom the participants interacted at CPA. Though many of the participants seemed unconcerned about cultural identities, the juxtaposition of the respondents' comments across the three status groups and across different cultural groups revealed certain trends. In terms of intersecting cultural identities, most staff, board members, interns, and volunteers were able to name or list their multiple and intersecting identities. For example, Ami listed her multiple identities, "Mmm, maybe as

a survivor of domestic violence and also a mother of a child and also a student, and also a woman.” However, all participants tended to speak about one group identity at a time.

The following, therefore, are the identified themes that I interpreted: (a) contested avowals and ascriptions of CPA’s Asian-ness from different status positions; (b) individualistic avowals that privileged organizational roles by all three status groups, constructed women as needing to be protected, and denied class differences between staff/interns and women served; and (c) problematic ascriptions that denied multivocality of intersecting identities and/or individuals’ preferred identity avowals.

### ***Contested Asian-ness in CPA from Various Status Positions***

“Being Asian” was one of the most frequently named, avowed and ascribed cultural identities in the context of the work of CPA. While CPA was intended to be an inclusive agency for all Asians and Asian Americans in the communities, the participants expressed contested constructions of CPA’s Asian-ness. Historically, the term of “Asian Americans” emerged from the civil rights movements in the 1960s to reflect an awareness of the increasing presence of Americans of Asian ancestry, but not all Asian American groups are equally studied and represented (Ling, 2008). The overall contestation of CPA’s Asian-ness occurred in three ways. First, not all Asian groups were served by CPA; in practice the dominant groups mentioned by respondents were Japanese, Vietnamese, and Chinese, across the three status groups. Second, volunteers overwhelmingly constructed a more negative valence of CPA’s Asian-ness. Third, in the context of CPA as an Asian-based agency, the participants interviewed avowed their specific ethnic/national identities such as being Vietnamese over their broader Asian identities.



*Describing “All Asian-ness” as Mission but Serving Particular Asians in*

*Practice:* CPA was constructed as an agency for all Asians, Asian Americans, or Asian immigrants on its websites, in its brochures, and in the majority of interview discourses. In reality, the clientele served by CPA<sup>26</sup> featured particular groups. In terms of the dominant groups represented among the interviewees, they were Japanese (n=5.25 with Megan as a self-identified quarter Japanese), Chinese (n=3), and Vietnamese (n=3). The dominant discourse of CPA’s “all Asian-ness” seemed to create a falsified sense of unifying or coming together of all Asian groups and to render invisible the inter-Asian hierarchies, rivalries, and stereotypes. Irwin (1996) contends that “The label Asia is problematic” (p.2) because it is a European construct that has no clear boundaries. Irwin argues that what ends up included in or excluded from the concept of Asia is often the result of personal preference. Similarly, the participants avowed and ascribed being Asian, but with great diversity and ambiguity.

The Asian-ness of CPA also conditioned Kumico to believe that CPA was inclusive since she and the staff had never turned anyone down for services. In the following excerpt, Kumico reflected on the Asian-ness of CPA in relation to a question regarding serving mixed Asians:

I haven’t heard racial comment, but I was questioned that “If you get White people, do you serve?” We always say that we never turn down a client and if we believe that we cannot help the person in their best interest, we will refer out, including Asians. And we do not deny any family member of mixed family or mixed ethnicity or racial families and so on. Our agency is only specifically specializing for Asians. And we never turn anyone down so we are not racist.

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<sup>26</sup> According to a PowerPoint presentation about CPA that Megan emailed me on April 11, 2010, the ethnic breakdown of CPA’s clients was: 23% Vietnamese, 22% Filipino, 18% Japanese, 14% Chinese, 7% Lao, 7% other, 5% Korean, 3% Indian, and 1% Thai.

However, enabled by the overarching Asian-ness of CPA, Adan rationalized and naturalized the realities of inter-Asian ethnic differences as he stated, “You will strongly recognize ethnicity difference, which is just natural for Asian people to have a specific different type of ethnicity you know.” The term Asian itself has multiple meanings that are racial, cultural, imaginary, socio-historical, and geo-political. As an Asian-based agency, I argue that CPA needs to define in concrete terms what “Asian” means in the context of an increasingly globalized world with unprecedented migration and interracial marriages.

Underlying the dominant discourse of CPA’s Asian-ness were the realities of fragmentation among different Asian groups and the challenges for CPA to construct an inclusive construct of Asian-ness. For example, Sabal delayed going to CPA for about six months because of the Asian-family representation she found on CPA’s website plus her experiences with most U.S. Americans’ equating Asians as Chinese. She explained:

If it weren’t for Lenya or Barbara, it’s not like, like I said, I really hate running away. And I didn’t know exactly what the Center of Peace for Asians meant. The Center of Peace for Asians, Asian ideas here in the U.S. is like about China and Japan. India somehow never comes into the picture... Otherwise, I would have gone there at least six months before. I came across it some place on the website or something, but I was not sure... I don’t know if you have observed that. To any American, Asian would be like they are looking for Chinese.

Sabal’s excerpt shows her experiences with and predictions about “Americans’” views of Asian. As demonstrated, stereotypes were voiced by both non-Asians and Asians. The following comment from Iago shows another stereotypical description about an Asian group by an Asian who was a member of another group.

You know Vietnamese—Okay, I really feel Vietnamese people are not that friendly to other people, like to Japanese, at least to Japanese. Like when I go to ABC (a local Asian grocery store), that’s Vietnamese only. They don’t even say thank you. They don’t even say hi. They just you know, I just don’t feel

comfortable going there. And the same thing I felt, ‘Oh, if I go to the person who deals with Orientals here, that would be great. So I went to a Vietnamese hairdresser.’ I really feel like I was discriminated against.

The identified examples of inter-Asian tensions suggest diversification of Asian groups that seemed to pose challenges to the effectiveness of CPA as an agency for all Asians. The 2000 census counted at least 28 ethnic groups of Asian Americans with the largest four groups being Chinese, Filipino, Indian, and Korean (Ling, 2008). To be an agency for all Asians, I argue that CPA needs to confront the issue of increasing diversification of Asian and Asian American communities in the United States.

*Negative Valence of Asian-ness by the Volunteering Members:* The volunteers as board members/interns/volunteers in particular constructed a more negative valence of CPA’s Asian-ness. Villard and Whipple (1976) define valence as “*the evaluative quality or meaning that a particular identity holds*” (p. 80, emphasis in original). The members of the volunteering status group tended to construct problematic and sometimes negative evaluation of Asian-ness in terms of their understandings of (a) what being Asian meant and (b) the Asian clientele. Regarding the meanings of being Asian, George remarked, in contrast to Hispanics, “We Asians, we work too hard. We don’t have time to go out, to go to hot spring, to go to mountains, hiking. People know how to enjoy themselves. We don’t.” Dung commented tentatively on the general reserve of Asians in her observation,

Asian people I feel like they are very, I guess, reserved, like they don’t say much....It’s hard to get it out from them. And then I guess a lot of Asian people are very polite, so when you talk to them I guess they are very nice. I guess. Like they don’t scream or anything like that.

The way George and Dung talked about Asians’ working hard and being reserved connoted negative evaluations of both qualities, especially in the sense of situating and comparing those behaviors against other cultural norms and implicating standards that

were not met. Also, when talking about the clients at CPA, the volunteers expressed an unfavorable attitude toward them as Asians through labels such as “disadvantaged people that suffer economically or whatever, mentally or whatever” by Iago and “immigrants who don’t speak English” by Lanh. Their ascriptions for the clients seemed to associate CPA’s Asian-ness with such negative qualities as being disadvantaged or unable to speak English.

To participants in the volunteer status group, Asian-ness on the surface may serve vaguely as a point of connection and/or comfort that I mentioned in an earlier section. The specific comments from the participants in this status group revealed negative valence or problematic perception of CPA’s Asian-ness. One possible explanation of the volunteers’ negative valence of CPA’s Asian-ness may be their competing and contradictory views of what being Asian meant, and reproduction of more wider circulating representations of Asians. Another explanation may be that the clients served by CPA did not match the popular profile of Asians and Asian Americans as the model minority that have overcome extreme obstacles and are successfully living the American dream (Kawai, 2005; S. J. Lee, 1996). The volunteers were mostly underused resources and seemed disconnected from the implicit advocacy agenda of CPA to work with underserved Asian immigrants whose rights and needs were unmet. While one of the staff members said that confronting problematic issues in Asian communities such as domestic violence was intentional to dismantle the stereotypes of Asians as polite, quiet, and inoffensive; however, it seems to me that one of the first steps to dismantle stereotypes about Asians might need to begin within CPA.

*Saliency of Particularized Ethnic/National<sup>27</sup> Identities:* All participants specifically expressed the saliency and importance of their particular ethnic/national identities such as being Japanese, Chinese, or Vietnamese, even though they also described themselves and one another as “Asian.” Phinney and Ong (2007) state that ethnic identity “is a highly salient and critically important issue for immigrant families” (p. 64). When considering Asian immigrants in the United States, the stereotype of Asians as “unassimilable foreigners” suggests that Asian/Asian Americans are often seen as perpetual foreigners who maintain deep ties to Asia (S. J. Lee, 1996, p. 4; Louie, 2008; Yu, 2001). I coded a total of 25 instances of avowals and ascriptions as being Asian from 11 out of the 16 participants except for Rachana, Jane, Lanh, Thi, and Fabia. At the same time, I coded a total of 37 instances of avowals and ascriptions as Japanese, Chinese, or Vietnamese. The dominant trend across the participants was the saliency of being Japanese, Chinese, or Vietnamese over being Asian as the following exchange between Ami and me illustrates:

Ami: I think people, American people say Asian. My boyfriend says Asian and stuff to me. Of course I’m Asian, one of the Asians. I feel like, you know, I’m not Korean. I’m not Chinese. And so I am Japanese.

Yea-Wen: So you would prefer Japanese over Asian—

Ami: Uhm, over Asian.

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<sup>27</sup> I choose the label of ethnic/national identity to describe the participants’ avowals as first-generation Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese, or Filipinos living in the United States and with close family members such as parents and siblings still residing in their ancestral homes in Asia. Thus, their Japanese-ness, Vietnamese-ness, or Chinese-ness, seemed to connote both ethnicity as “a sense of belonging to their culture of origin” (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 51) and nationality as nationals or citizens of Japan, Vietnam, or China. The U.S. law does not require a naturalized U.S. citizen to choose between one citizenship or another; hence, a naturalized U.S. citizen may have dual nationality, which requires her/him to obey laws of both countries (U.S. Department of State, April 10, 2010).

In terms of those groups that were not represented in this study, Adan's comment below suggested that the trend of endorsing particular ethnic identities over Asian identities might be applicable to those groups as well:

What would have helped? Uh, it would have helped if there were some Filipino clients that I would be able to interact with and give them information about the services they offer. You know like maybe a translator, but most people speak English, so I don't see any problem around that area.

Among the five participants who did not explicitly describe their Asian identities, four of them avowed and/or ascribed their specific ethnic/national identities as exemplified in Lanh's comments of the Vietnamese communities below:

I think in the future there will be about 2 million Vietnamese people living in the US. Every year they grow up. The community is growing bigger and stronger with more resources. Twenty years ago my kids came over here and they were 19 years old. Before they came over here, they don't know how to speak English, but now they are lawyers. They can compete with the American lawyers.

Similarly, Fabia stated in relation to CPA that "There are not too many places where a Japanese person can count on." I should caution that, when interpreting this trend of the salience of the particularized ethnic/national identities, it is important to take into account the context of CPA as serving primarily, if not all, first-generation immigrants from Asia during this project as well as the fact that 15 out of 16 participants were first-generation Asian immigrants themselves. As Zach pointed out below, the salience of root culture(s) seemed particularly important and meaningful for first-generation immigrants.

But my sense is that like the first generation immigrants, over time, they kinda slowly define their cultural identity, not because they have learned something new, but because it has always been in them, because they are never detached from their root culture. They're always in touch with their families and friends back home.

When considering identity as "questions of using resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being" (Hall, 1996, p. 4), the emerged

saliency of particularized ethnic/national identities can be understood as the participants' using resources of their ethnic/national languages and cultures more than their Asian-ness. Also, this trend suggests the need to problematize the distinction between ethnicity and nationality among first-generation Asian immigrants and maybe naturalized U.S. citizens with dual nationality.

### ***Individualistic Avowals***

The avowals among the participants was individualistic and, almost without exception, apolitical with very little acknowledgement of the historical, institutional, and social contexts that may enable or constrain their multiple group identities. Besides their racial and ethnic/national identities, most participants avowed their important group identities at CPA in terms of the roles that they played in CPA such as being a counselor or the roles that CPA enabled them to protect or maintain such as being a mother. Given that multiple cultural identities are (re)established, sustained, and challenged in interactions (Collier, 1998), probably because of the CPA context and privileging of ethnic/national identities, it is not surprising the interviewed participants alluded to two of their multiple group identities: their Asian-ness or ethnicity/nationality and their roles. The participants' multiple cultural identities with corresponding histories might not be fully recognized at CPA. The few instances of describing gendered identities and class positions suggest problematic assumptions about the clients. The available discourses of gendered identities from the two male volunteers and some of the clients seemed to position women clients as vulnerable and needing to be protected. The few instances of the clients' describing their class status seemed unacknowledged by the staff and interns.

*Avowals that Privileged CPA Roles:* For the staff, interns, and volunteers, it was the specific roles that they played in the context of CPA that were salient in their discourses. For example, Kumico avowed, “I am definitely the center coordinator and with the communication with executive director that I am the person supposed to oversee the entire project. That’s who I am.” Speaking from the location of a feminist/political activist, Rachana avowed, “I am continuously negotiating my identity as a person who thinks very politically and I have to always think of these women as victims, but I don’t think of them as victims.” Similarly, George avowed, “I’m the technical person for the agency.” For the clients, it was the roles that CPA helped them to protect or enact such as being a mother or a grandmother. As Fabia stated, “Hum, [silence], hum, what’s important? Like, I think for me it’s, what’s important to me is my grandsons’ well-being, and Kumico understands that very much.”

Speaking from their locations as clients at CPA, I found one instance of avowal from Thi and two indirect references from Yuru and Fabia about being unlucky or abused people. Thi avowed as one of “the not lucky people” that came to CPA. Yuru indirectly described her position when she exclaimed, “Nobody wants a burdensome woman.” Fabia indirectly acknowledged her experiences with domestic violence by describing CPA as “helping abused people” and then stating “Sometimes people have to get out of the house without anything. I have been there.” Thi’s avowal was particularly interesting in terms of her attribution of her situation as accidental or unlucky. In a different segment, Thi repeated the same term when she said, “If I meet some people who are not lucky like me, I tell them to go to the Center of Peace for Asians.” The clients’ choices of avowals, whether directly or indirectly, as being “unlucky,” “burdensome,” and “abused”



seemed to suggest passivity, lower levels of agency and lack of control as well as function to construct lower status positions. While all the clients went to CPA for assistance, their avowals suggest they did not view their positions as becoming empowered by CPA's assistance to better navigate the social systems that were implicated in their particular situations.

While the staff, interns, volunteers, and board members were able to list their intersecting cultural identities, there was little discussion about the enactment and negotiation of those multiple identities. Among the participants' listed identities, (a) ethnic/national identities and (b) organizational roles at CPA, were the two most prominently avowed identities. There was limited discourse on how those two identities may intersect or collide since most of the discourses tended to focus on a single identity category that was relevant in the context of CPA. This is exemplified by Rachana's avowal, "I prefer the consciousness-raising. I am very political. I am a feminist." Even when I followed up a question about the role of her perceived ethnic/national identities at CPA, Rachana responded by describing how others viewed her identifications. She said it was her academic identity as a feminist that was most salient, "I think more than nation states, they view my identity as someone who is just too far off doing her academic thing. That identity is most salient."

*Avowals that Constructed Women Clients as Needed to be Protected:* Most participants did not remark on their own gendered identities except for the two male volunteers and some of the clients. Issues of sex and gender usually did not come up for the female staff, interns, and volunteers unless they started exploring their relationships with the male volunteers and clients. For example, Dung initially commented on having

experienced no gender barriers at CPA and later reconsidered when thinking about George and the male clients.

But even though there's George I guess, we can still talk to him...Because there are some clients that are male and then Kumico is afraid for me to work with them because I am female, and so she assigns all the male work to George so he can go and talk to them. Because she is afraid that since they are male clients like they're kinda unstable or something like that.

Males at CPA were constructed as an anomaly through words such as "but," "even though," and "still." In terms of the male clients, Dung's description constructed them as to be feared because of they were "unstable" as masculine males and volatile clients at CPA. Her comments suggested problematic perceptions and assumptions about (male) clients at CPA.

As a client, Fabia stated her belief that "Women have to be protected" in thinking about her deceased daughter. She explained:

After Molly died [a violent death], several people told me that Molly was so scared. She didn't tell me because, to both my of daughters and my son, I am the only so-called family. So she didn't want me to worry. But I know. Something told me that I was going to lose my daughter. And I even suggested [to Molly], 'Why don't you stop dental school for a little while? You can come and live with me in Upstate New York.' She wouldn't do it...Women have to be protected. It's hard for a woman with two children to go to school and have a career.

Fabia's comment suggested vulnerability of women from her client status at CPA. On the other hand, Adan as a male described his discomfort of interacting with and his need to be "very careful" around female clients. He said:

It's mainly a more feminine type of work [in CPA]. So me as a male coming in there I feel a little awkward...Because I would be working with more females and I'm kinda nervous about how they would think of me or how they would look at me. I'm very, very careful about what I say and what I do because I don't want to offend anyone.

Adan's perceived need to be very careful around female clients as a male constructed the women clients as vulnerable and easily upset without providing comments acknowledging their experiences with abusive contexts. Taken together, remarks about women clients across status positions constructed them as vulnerable and/or unstable and thus needed to be protected by the staff, interns, and volunteers at CPA. Such constructions assumed minimum agency for the women clients and may have the unintentional effect of perpetuating views of women as the weaker sex.

*Avowals of Lower Class Status from the Clients:* Most participants rarely commented on their class status except for a few instances of the clients' describing their lower class status. Overall, the staff and interns at CPA, except Rachana, did not acknowledge the effect of socioeconomic class positions in their relationships with clients. For instance, Dung described one of her clients as "working as a waitress" but denied class difference between her and the client. She explained in response to my question about if there was any class difference between her and her client:

I don't think so, but like looking at this, since she just moved here from Vietnam and she was working as a waitress. Well, she was going to school, but I guess now she is unemployed. And I guess you can say there is but I really don't see there is anything.

Words like "working as a waitress" and "unemployed" implicated this client's lower class status in relation to Dung.

From the clients' perspectives, the theme of "free services" that I discussed earlier suggested their overall lower socioeconomic status that implicated what services they could or could not afford if it were not for CPA. For Yuru, the affordability issue ended up deterring her from receiving free services from CPA based upon what sounded like psychological manipulation from her White husband.

I know in America counselors make a lot of money and everything is expensive. When I really, really have problems, I would receive any help without hesitation. Now that things has improved a bit, I don't want to receive free services any more... You see afterwards I came back here to live with my husband... When I first came back I felt horrible, he said, 'If we need to pay, we should not be greedy and we should pay.' He only said that once or twice. 'You see, are they [CPA] going to pay for you for the rest of your life? That is not possible. That's so expensive and they can't afford it.' So if they can't afford it, I have no ability to pay for that.

Yuru's example, in particular, highlighted that recognition of class status positions in staff/intern-client relationships could have consequential impact on CPA's work.

### ***Problematic Ascriptions***

When speaking about others and ascribing their identities, the participants most frequently ascribed one of three group identities. They were (a) Asian ethnic/national identities; (b) educational levels and backgrounds; and (c) roles in CPA in terms of counselors, clients, or staff. In terms of the individuals who were being described, Kumico was the most frequently mentioned. She was ascribed a wide range of identities related to her roles at CPA such as a supervisor, an active woman, and most prominently as Japanese.

I defined ascriptions to be problematic when they met two criteria. First, participants' ascriptions were problematic when they were not consistent with individuals' avowals. Second, participants' ascriptions became problematic when one identity alone was overextended as the basis for making assumptions about the individual's conduct. Overall, participants seemed to exercise limited recognition of the multivocality within cultural groups and of intersecting cultural identities in a NPO that had staff and served clients with varied ethnic identities, that was dominated by females, and that served clients who were often living in abusive conditions.

*Ascriptions that Contradicted Avowals:* Most staff and volunteers' comments revealed a lack of concern about asking for others' preferred identifications at CPA. As well there was a trend of "different shouldn't matter" in responses from staff. This discourse that group identity difference did not matter in the context of serving clients was dominant and persistent at CPA as exemplified by the center coordinator, Kumico's, comment below:

Umm, usually client won't ask my nationality and uh, client won't ask my position here. They're open to whatever help they can get at this crisis mode of, 'Oh, help me.' And you happen to be there and you seem to smile well. You seem easy to talk to.

Though there was the persistent tendency to claim that differences in cultural identities should not influence the work of CPA, volunteers and clients called attention to differences. For instance, Adan in one instance described Kumico as having "a very strong Japanese accent." All five interviewed clients identified Kumico as Japanese or knew that Kumico was from Japan. Both of the self-identified Japanese clients, Fabia, and Tricia, even described feeling a special bond with Kumico based their shared identities as Tricia explained:

That's the best part, because you know it's not only about like the 2<sup>nd</sup> language to speak to each other. But otherwise we have the same background of Japanese culture, of Japanese common sense. So, it's much easier to speak with her and to understand each other. That's why you know until the Center of Peace for Asians I never, never think about this... But you know now come to think of it as an Asian center here it's very, very important.

Despite the dominant discourse that identities do not matter as Kumico described, participants were aware of other's identities and did ascribe identities for others sometimes in ways that contradicted their avowed identities. For example, George, a volunteer, discussed below the tensions related to his mixed cultural backgrounds:

Well, it's hard to say, because my family is kinda like a mix between Chinese and Vietnamese. You know, I don't even know much Vietnamese though because my parents were born in Vietnam and they told me that my grandfather was Chinese and my grandmother was Vietnamese. And uh, I was born in China and when—in China people will say that I am Vietnamese... People keep asking me where I'm from. China. I'm Chinese. Don't ever try to convince me to think that I am Vietnamese.

Another example was Megan's protest as being ascribed as "a White intern" by other staff members on her application form when she avowed her identity to be "a Native Eurasian." Since CPA was an identity-based agency for Asians, I argue for the importance of not only recognizing the difference between ascriptions and avowals but also honoring the ascriptions that others choose for themselves. Particularly for those with minority-status identities at CPA, it did matter and mattered greatly as Megan explained below:

But still I guess it denies them of their identity based on how we perceive it instead of how they perceive it. I don't agree with—. 'Cause if they look at me and say I'm White and I'm not. Maybe they might think that I am Spanish, but I am not.

*Ascriptions based on Educational Level:* Besides contradictory ascriptions and avowals, I found another tendency of making problematic assumptions about others based on a single ascribed identity, particularly with educational levels. While the participants reported few instances of conflicts with other members at CPA, most instances of conflicts that were reported were related to problematic assumptions that arose from ascribed educational status. There was one particular conflict where accounts from both sides were represented in the interview discourses. It was a conflict between two self-identified Vietnamese volunteers, Dung and Lanh. Dung described the conflict as "unfathomable" as she said, "Well, he's an interpreter/volunteer. And he's Vietnamese

also. And I don't know why, but I guess he has some kind of problems with me. I sent him brochures to translate. But then he sent back e-mails saying like, being sarcastic.”

On the other hand, Lanh attributed the conflict solely to Dung's being a university student and in turn not knowing how to work with him as in his own words below:

Dung is just a university student. Sometimes she worked, she didn't know how to email for the relationship. So, sometimes she emailed to me but she did not copy to Kumico. You know, that the relation—I think she is too young. She is a student, so she doesn't know how to work well. When she is a student in the instances where you sent out an email to us to ask us to do something, she has to copy to her boss. You know, three-way communication, but she doesn't understand that because she is too young. This was the first time that she worked for Kumico.

To Lanh, education levels appeared to be related to professionalism and became a critical identifier for him as he interacted with others at CPA. When I interviewed Lanh, one of the first things he said to me was “I was quick to offer to see you because I see you are well-educated.” Also, one of the things that Lanh mentioned about Kumico, besides her being Japanese, was that she knew “the university that I studied at Japan.” In the reported conflict between Dung and Lanh, the way that Lanh ascribed salience of Dung's identity as a university student presented challenges to their working together and adversely affected their relationships at CPA. What Lanh's ascription of Dung seemed to achieve was the elevation of Lang's status position in relational to Dung.

Overall, the emerged themes of CPA's contested Asian-ness, individualistic avowals, and problematic ascriptions suggest several trends regarding cultural identity positions at CPA. First, CPA's contested Asian-ness featured competing discourses and highlighted the dominant status positions of particular Asian ethnic/national identities at CPA such as Japanese and Chinese. Though the “Asian” label seemed instrumental for CPA's existence, “Asian” as a racialized category suggested a certain hierarchy of

identities underneath it. Second, the privileging of organizational roles seemed functional in reproducing hierarchy and differential status positions in CPA. While certain organizational exigencies might demand timely decision-making, the privileging of organizational roles seemed to naturalize and legitimize automatic decision-making by individuals in higher status positions such as Kumico. Third, the problematic avowals and ascriptions implicated a failure to recognize and honor individuals' avowals such as gender and class, which presented challenges especially in staff/intern-client working relationships. Fourth, the individual avowals and problematic ascriptions denied intersectionality of identities and presented challenges for CPA to fulfill its mission of working with underserved Asians. As an identity-based agency, Asian-ness predominated at CPA, but the intersections between Asian-ness, educational levels, and socio-economic classes were ignored. In practice, CPA was not just a NPO for Asians but for underserved Asians dealing with issues such as domestic violence, in which the elements of class, gender, and race are interwoven.

### **Dialectical Tensions and Negotiating Status Hierarchy**

The third research question inquires what dialectical tensions characterize relationship negotiation in CPA, and also asks what interview responses demonstrate with regard to negotiating hierarchy and the nature of status relationships in CPA. First, I identify dialectical tensions that characterize relationship negotiation in CPA by analyzing interview discourses about moments of connection and disconnection across status relationships. Second, I examine hierarchy and the nature of status relationships in CPA through analyzing interview discourses featuring experiences of marginalization. What those experiences highlight is a pattern of context-specific status positions that



functioned as dominance. Third, I interpret what is achieved or produced through the ways in which individuals in CPA negotiated their status and relationships.

### ***Dialectical Tensions Characterizing Relationship Negotiation in CPA***

Participants across the three status groups did not all interact with one another on a regular basis. Most of the staff-volunteer interactions took place in the context of working with or talking about how to work with clients. The majority of interactions in CPA took place between clients and the staff members or female interns with whom they were assigned to work. The majority of the clients also described working with only one person from CPA. Both Fabia and Tricia indicated that they only worked with Kumico; Sabal had seen other staff members but primarily worked with Jane. The following are the identified dialectics that I interpreted to characterize relationship negotiations at CPA: (a) similarity vs. difference, and (b) dependence vs. independence.

*Similarity and/or difference:* The first dialectic centered on the contradictory push and pull between being similar to and/or different from one another in the process of relating at CPA. All the interviewed participants were both similar and different at the same time in terms of their race, ethnicity, sex, and educational levels. However, most participants emphasized and privileged similarity and disregarded difference. The privileging of similarity over difference was partly conditioned by CPA's organizational discourse as an agency for all Asians, which promoted the participants to treat and recognize each other as the same in Asian-ness. In contrast, only when differences were related to gaining access to resources were they valued. As "relating is a deeply sociocultural process" (Baxter, 2011, p. 9), the participants constantly negotiated and

struggled with competing sociocultural discourses that conditioned them to see one another as predominantly similar in their ongoing relating processes.

The most prevalent form of this dialectic revolved around the tension between being Asian and having a particular ethnicity/nationality such as Japanese, Chinese, or Vietnamese that I touched upon earlier. Everyone's being Asians at CPA was stressed more than any other identities. Since most participants did not ask for or talk about their Asian ethnicities/nationalities in everyday conversation, the participants usually looked for physical or visual cues to determine a person's Asian-ness. Megan's contested Asian-ness was probably most telling of this. Phenotypically, Megan appeared more White than Asian. That's probably why she was racialized as White—as different—by the staff on her application forms. However, Megan recalled being introduced as part Japanese by Kumico. She explained:

When Kumico introduces me she says, 'She's part Japanese.' Like, so that's the piece she finds very important instead of saying, 'Oh like she is almost done with graduating, she's our case worker advocate--.' She's like, 'She's part Japanese.' It's one of the first things that she said.

Kumico chose to present Megan as part Japanese—a similarity to Kumico—and emphasizing Asian identity. Megan described a discussion about a client with Kumico. The client looked Asian but was only a fourth Asian, half Spanish, and a fourth Italian.

I said, 'Do you realize we're going to lose a client?' She [Kumico] said, 'What do you mean?' And I told her the client's name and she, 'She's really only a fourth?' 'Well yea,' she [the client] told me. But she looks Asian so.

In CPA, it seemed looking Asian was important enough to qualify for Asian-ness and similarity to others. Non-Asian ethnicities were subsequently ignored. While this dialectic of being Asian yet simultaneously having different ethnicities/nationalities was palpable at CPA, most participants did not comment on how they might negotiate the

tensions but simply reverted to be CPA mission and stressed everyone's sameness as Asians. The privileging of sameness as Asians functioned to deny differences and allowed some ethnicities/nationalities to have the dominant voices, thus reproducing an inter-Asian status hierarchy.

Not all differences were shunned or ignored at CPA. There were several instances where differences functioned to showcase access to resources, knowledge, or information and seemed instrumental in facilitating the relationships between the staff/interns and clients. In particular, the common identities as Asian women facilitated the bonds between staff and clients. Differences in terms of English language competency and educational levels allowed staff and volunteers to be resources and assist the clients. For example, Dung explained her connection with two Vietnamese clients with whom she felt she related as Vietnamese and her knowledge and language skills that enabled her to interpret for them. The following excerpt illustrates this:

I've been working with two clients and they're both Vietnamese and because they are both Vietnamese so I can kind of like relate to them and somehow kinda feel like that I need to help them I guess...And with the clients too, like they know that since I can speak English and communicate with the other people more, I guess they rely on me too, like calling this person for them and calling this other person or doing this form for them.

Similarly, Yuru described being able to connect with Kumico and Rachana in her situation as Asian women and commented on the strength of having Asians with higher educational levels as resources for CPA.

I feel that Kumico and Rachana really understand what a woman may feel in my situation. I could tell them any private issues that I may have. I was not shy at all about telling any of my private issues. If it were a White person, I would not know how I might feel. In my heart, I feel that because we are all Asians they could better understand my feelings and what I was going through...I think people with higher education levels are smarter. I think if the Center of Peace for Asians has a lot of highly educated people it would be a wonderful thing.

Higher educational levels as resources also manifested in terms of cross-cultural knowledge between Asian cultures and U.S. American cultures as well as knowledge about navigating the social systems in the United States. Both forms of knowledge were useful in facilitating the work of CPA in meeting clients' needs. For example, Fabia discussed below her appreciation toward Kumico for explaining to her the cross-cultural differences in constructing parent-child relationships.

Most Japanese, Korean, Chinese, or Filipino, I think we have different kinds of culture and you know Americans, especially here in this state. Here it is almost like children taking over. You know, because you cannot spank them... So Kumico explained to me that they were teaching cultural differences, so it's okay to talk to them... I think the Center of Peace for Asians is very good for Asians who live here in the U.S. and to help them communicate with White Americans this way. Teaching us and teaching another person why we think this way.

Overall, the interviewed participants constantly had to negotiate the push and pull between being similar to and different from one another even though the dominant strategies seemed to privilege similarities and validate only differences that implicated those with access to resources, information or knowledge as having higher status. Relating in CPA occurred along lines of similarities, and most participants seemed unprepared to negotiate lines of difference such as feminist consciousness raising preferences versus preferences for short-term counseling strategies. The following quote from Rachana illustrates this.

With Debra [the executive director], I have a very good relationship. She said, 'Rachana, I exactly understand what you are saying, but you know you have to understand they are not trained like you. They don't think like that.' I said, 'But it is not even about my theoretical background. It is more about them not trying to listen to what I have to say.' But for that probably a whole different kind of, probably those are communication gaps between counselors and us.

The participants at CPA, though all Asians to certain degrees, did not have homogenous identifications. While the similarities as Asians and Asian women may open the door for trust to develop, the differences in educating and training reinforced role differentiation and reproduced status hierarchy. The privileging of similarities functioned to exclude voices that were different or challenged the status quo at CPA, however.

*Dependence and/or Independence:* The second dialectic centered on the tensions between being dependent on and being independent from one another, particularly in the hierarchical relationships between clients and their counselors/case workers in CPA. Participants mostly commented on cross-status relationships that involved power differentials such as the client-staff/intern relationships and the staff-intern/volunteer relationships. Except the staff, participants said they did not have much contact with members of the same status group. Comments such as “As board members we interact at the personal level very little” from Zach, and “I rarely see them [fellow interns and volunteers] so I don’t talk to them as much” from Dung were typical for most same-status relationships. When describing cross-status relating, most participants commented on hierarchical relationships where they felt some tensions or were aware of power differentials as Kumico reflected on relationships with the clients below:

We [staff, interns, and volunteers] clarify our roles, especially when we experience that relationship with clients, because it will likely to be a more hierarchical relationship. Because the person with whom you are helping, seeking for help, there is a power going on. And if it is evolved in more like friendship, even though the client side doesn’t want to do things but she was the one who had so much help from that volunteer or intern or staff; then clients have to proceed against their will because of the power... We don’t put our client in the odd position and we are the ones that need to be careful and ask our clients, ‘Do you feel like you have to do something for me like bringing me chocolate?’ Those things we need to clarify. And the same things can be said about staff member and volunteer, and staff member and intern. Staff member is the one who asks for some work or chore to be done, but staff is the one who takes responsibility.

Kumico cautioned the necessity of clarifying roles whenever a status hierarchy was involved. She believed strongly that, in cross-status relationships between staff, clients, and volunteers, the staff in higher status positions should always “take responsibility.” However, in the context of working with underserved Asian clients, the discourse of taking responsibilities in positions of higher status seemed problematic and had the unintended effect of removing responsibilities from the clients and volunteers. This discourse of responsibility-talking by the persons in higher status seemed to constrain negotiating the dependence/independence tension particularly in the client-staff/volunteer relationships. Also, this discourse of individual responsibility-taking seemed to render invisible the impact of structural conditions on issues such the domestic violence that CPA was dealing with. This view seemed to assume that power was static and acontextual and always resided with the person in higher status positions.

Besides her view of responsibility-taking by individuals in higher status positions, Kumico’s philosophy of supporting clients to take risks also conditioned the negotiation of the dependence/independence dialectic. Grounded in Kumico’s philosophy of enabling clients to take risks in supportive environments that she had cultivated at CPA through trainings and orientations, this particular view of relationships was echoed and endorsed by other staff, interns, and volunteers. Kumico discussed her philosophy of relating to clients:

Without support, people cannot take risks. And it seems under the counseling situation or working relationships—So that it needs to be supportive to each other at same time that, especially the area of clients that we need to be open to development of themselves because there is not always—never perfect work.

When this approach of supporting clients in solving their own problems was implemented properly, it seemed productive for both the clients and the counselors/case workers involved. Megan's comments below demonstrate this:

Kinda helping them (the clients) because at first they're kinda like, 'Oh I don't know if this is the right place to go.' I say, 'Yea it is. Come on.' And then once they learn about the resources available, it's nice to see them like, 'Oh, I called my attorney today,' on their own. 'Oh really what did the attorney say?' You know. 'Can I help you with anything?' 'Oh, no, I got it.' Or 'Yes, please help me.' That's good!

Knowing that the dependence/independence tension was inevitable, Kumico worked hard to prepare the interns and volunteers before assigning them clients. During my outreach training with Kumico, she explained the ground rules for interacting with clients that seemed specifically for dealing with this dialectic. For example, the trainees were told not to accept any gifts including food from clients and not to say hi to clients when bumping into them outside of CPA. Also, Dung remarked to me about Kumico's suggestion of turning her phone off before going to sleep just in case the clients called in the middle of the night. All those ground rules were intended to ease the process of negotiating boundaries with clients. However, despite Kumico's efforts, this notion of supporting clients to take risks appeared vague to some trainees. George expressed a critical incident that completely changed how he worked with clients and forced him to say no to clients' requests when appropriate.

With the clients it's changing. I used to be like having good relationships with clients. And one time I had this Chinese client she was like fighting hard for her dead husband's social security benefits. And one time after the interpretation she invited me to her house to have dinner... I got in trouble and I almost got arrested by cops... Yes, that was the turning point. I will never, never again do or go out with clients... Yeah that's the Chinese culture, you know, when people asking you it's hard to refuse... Yeah. I got to be really, really cold right now.

As much as Kumico promoted a professional stance for interacting with clients to prevent dependence, the discourse of professionalism denied the nature of personal responses to CPA's work and ignored the clients' views of the relationships. Counselors at CPA may argue that the personal should be discouraged. However, what is left out in this view is that the personal can also be a political "response to a social structure in which women are systematically dominated, exploited, and oppressed" (Hartmann, 1997, p. 100). Integrating the personal and political position however is a marginalized voice in CPA.

Although the interns and volunteers were trained to conduct themselves as professionals to help the clients gain independence, the clients, however, considered them more as friends and family members such a grandma whom they could rely on. For example, Sabal depicted Jane as like a (grand)mother to her: "She [Jane] is like my parent, my mother almost, or my grandmother. I respected my grandmother a lot. She is more a mother to me than my own mother." For the clients, treating the staff/interns as friends and family seemed instrumental in negotiating their reliance on CPA. Otherwise, how might the clients reconcile placing their trust on an agency like CPA in a foreign country where they just recently emigrated? As exemplified in the excerpt below, while Tricia stated Kumico took care of her more like a client than a friend, their relationships seemed much more personal. Also, Tricia preferred to "be taken care of" by Kumico as someone who knew her well.

I told her in her session of counseling. So she helps me so many times and in so many different ways. So, that's why the relationship between she and me is not just about this problem, you know. Besides now she knows me and I know her. So and most of our meeting is for my art works. She gives me some idea. She helps me so much. For instance, like I had my exhibition, my own exhibition last month. And she took a day for me, you know. And she helped to introduce me to other people and to welcome people. So, that's very inspirational to me... I think it's somewhat a friend, but mostly she takes care of me as her client.



Kumico's framing of responsibility-taking and her philosophy of supportive risk-taking conditioned how staff, interns, and volunteers viewed their relationships with the clients. However, the clients overwhelmingly preferred to treat the staff and volunteers as friends and family members for them to reconcile their relying on CPA. Overall, it seemed the negotiation of this dialectic was particularly arduous on the part of the staff, interns, and volunteers. Megan explained:

It can be frustrating at times, because it feels like sometimes they rely on you to the point where they become, well—how can I put it? I try to empower them and sometimes they don't want to be.

The client's responses suggested that they either did not see the relationships as supporting them to become independent or did not desire independence since they could ask CPA for most things they needed as Thi stated, "When I tell them something, they help me with everything." Ultimately, the clients need to decide and take responsibilities for the change that they want to see. Also, the clients' views of the family-like relationships challenged the effectiveness of CPA's approach of individual counseling combined with case management in supporting the clients to become independent.

Both emerged dialectics suggest a struggle in CPA over the desire for empowerment and the reality of fostering dependence. Enabled and constrained by the ways in which CPA members negotiated the dialectical tensions in their relationships, certain status hierarchies were privileged and reproduced.

### ***Status Hierarchy within CPA***

The descriptions of status positions reproducing hierarchy and dominance come from interview discourses with participants positioned as the "minority." In contrast, responses from those in higher status positions reflected what they experienced as natural

and normal and functioned ultimately as location of domination as well. Four particular status positions emerged as dominant in the context of CPA: (a) particular organizational roles such as board, staff, interns, and volunteers, (b) counselors, (c) having higher educational levels, and (d) being female. As dominance relates to the negotiation and circulation of influence, the emerged dominant status positions also implicated assumptions about levels of individual agency at CPA.

*Organizational Roles:* Members in the staff status group were the ones who made most decisions and conducted the daily running of CPA. Their roles as staff gave them higher status at CPA. Among the staff, Kumico as the center coordinator was often perceived as the leader who naturally made most decisions. This emerged in comments from many clients, interns, volunteers, and some fellow staff members. For example, Yuru stated in her experiences that “Kumico was the leader.” Ami described Kumico as “the boss for the interns.” George said half jokingly that “Disagreements? I don’t know. Mostly what Kumico says I will have to agree.” Rachana, a fellow staff member, depicted Kumico as, “Kumico makes a lot of decisions and, like most of them they follow that.” This higher status position of staff was rooted in power relations evident when making decisions, having their opinions solicited, and supervising others.

Megan talked about the elevation of her status at CPA after being promoted to a part-time staff as the following exchange illustrates:

Megan: Because my opinion I think is valued more instead of an intern who has to be here. I’m staff who wants to be here. Even though I wanted to be here when I was an intern, but it was kind of—

Yea-Wen: So what you say is that it carries more power, more weight.

Megan: Yea 'cause they single me out more during board meetings because I don't like talking in groups. But when it's me talking to everybody, I don't tend to do that. But then they're, 'What do you think?' Now they're picking on me.

The board of directors also seemed to enjoy a higher status position in CPA. Adan described his voiceless presence as a volunteer at one of the board meetings he attended in response to my question about his participation in the board meetings,

No. I just listened. I felt like a broom standing right next to the wall [laughter]. What I did on the day of the presentation was we had to clean the floor. The floor was filthy. It hadn't been cleaned for a long time. So that was my participation.

In my experience as a volunteer at CPA, I was never notified or invited to attend any board meetings. Most interns and volunteers that I interviewed rarely interacted with the board of directors. Their separate meetings and Adan's experience suggested that the board of directors enjoyed a higher status position than the interns and volunteers.

In terms of the board members' status position in relation to the staff members, the board of directors functioned as a governing body that put them in the position to make certain influential decisions at CPA such as the executive director search. For instance, Kumico discussed two interactions with the board that surprised her and demonstrated the board's capability to challenge Kumico's decisions as the center coordinator. One interaction dealt with Kumico's recommended candidate for the executive director position, and the other dealt with this very dissertation.

Until the executive director issue, I didn't have any problem working with [the board]—it's not a problem, but I didn't have any major things going on between staff member and the board. And among the board, they are not fully functioning as an official board yet. Some of the members are new to the board. And in the terms of establishing formal procedures, this is still a learning period for the board too. This incident of my recommendation [of an executive director candidate] did not go through, which was definitely coming from good sake of board thinking about formal procedures, da, da, da. And another thing is this one I am questioning [Referring to the board's approval of my project]. I thought that

probably this was going on by email. One email might solve it, but some people are really eager to know if the research turns out to be good for agency.

As the center coordinator, Kumico felt it was her responsibility to find her replacement before she left CPA. However, her recommended candidate withdrew before the board could act on it. Kumico also felt that what she did with my request for partnering with CPA for this dissertation was within her authority before one board member raised concerns. Additionally, Adan described one instance at a board meeting where Kumico was told by one board member to do a presentation at the last minute, “She said, ‘You, Kumico, have to do the presentation for United Way.’ So in a short notice she had to like, I felt her [Kumico’s] stress because she kinda expressed it verbally.”

Overall, the hierarchy of role-based status groups at CPA revolved around being in higher positions with not only influence but the responsibility to make important presentations to represent the center. Interestingly, Kumico was designated the role as the “center coordinator” but really functioned in the position of what an “executive director” or “chief executive officer” typically does in a NPO. Edwards and Austin (2006) summarizes that the executive director in the nonprofit sector functions to participate in the formation and implementation of policy as well as bring policy issues and recommendations to the board of directors. The negotiations between Kumico and the board regarding their respective responsibilities and abilities to decide seemed to suggest that organizational roles in CPA were hierarchical and sometimes ambiguous.

*Counselors:* Since CPA was constructed as a service-providing agency that primarily specialized in providing counseling services in Asian languages, counseling expertise then functioned to create higher status positions for counselors in relation to individuals with trainings in other areas. Also, those with counseling expertise were

sometimes referred to as “counselors” as Dung’s comment demonstrates, “I guess maybe because they are counselors and that’s why I could go and tell them and they would be very understanding.” In a counseling-dominated agency like CPA, the counseling-based perspective was privileged over other perspectives. In my interview, Iago expressed numerous times in numerous ways her frustration in board meetings with her voice as a practitioner with a business background. Iago used different phrases to express her frustration such as: “I mean I really feel that my voice is not strong enough.”; “You have opinion and if they listen—if they adopt that, that would be great, but they won’t. They won’t.”; and “I don’t know if I’m taken seriously. I really doubt.” Iago explained below the dominance of the counseling perspective on the board:

You know, I really feel like they all know about counseling and they know those things about disadvantaged people. But I really, I don’t have that kind of experience much at a big scale. But at small scale I did, like helping individuals like that, but not at a big scale. And of course, like Cheryl of course she specializes in that, you know. And she knows those things, but sometimes I feel like I really don’t know. So sometimes I feel like, ‘How much can I contribute?’ You know what I mean?

Similarly, Rachana speaking as a feminist with a global and structural perspective on domestic violence also felt her voice was not heard by her colleagues at CPA:

I also tried to tell the counselors, but they are not interested in listening, that the girls are coming as these mail-order brides from the Philippines. They are not privileged girls. They are already girls of lower class. I mean in the Philippines privileged girls won’t come like that. And they would rather come through falling in love, so-called, which is a problem, but they would come at a different way if they come or as students or whatever.

Also, evident in Rachana’s comment was the minority view at CPA of acknowledging the intersections of clients’ race, gender, and class.

*Having Higher Educational Levels:* Educational levels, more specifically degree levels (i.e., bachelors, masters, and doctorates) also functioned to create differential status

positions at CPA. There was a trend of participants with lower educational degrees remarking on feeling the hierarchical difference as Adan described his experiences, “These guys are PhDs and CEOs of companies. So you know, I feel like even though I’m 40, I feel like I’m kinda like a kindergartner trying to fit in with the 4<sup>th</sup> graders.” Similarly, Megan expressed below the hierarchical difference between counselors with master’s degrees and case workers with bachelor’s degrees:

Megan: I don’t know, I guess case workers are looked down on a little more than counselors even though I’m almost there. It seems like but I don’t know.

Yea-Wen: Why? Is it that a counselor can’t do what a case manager or a case worker does? Why?

Megan: It’s like the bachelor’s versus the master’s level. It’s more the degree levels.

The last example came from a board meeting where board members with higher education levels used academic jargon that was not familiar to the other board members, Iago explained below:

Iago: In fact, about one paper that you got permission or certificate to do this project. What do you call that in three characters?

Yea-Wen: The IRB approval.

Iago: Exactly. The IRB approval, they were just talking like that. Of course both of them are PhDs. Okay. They were talking about it. So I said, “Excuse me, what does it stand for?”

Educational or degree levels emerged as another identifier or signifier creating differential status positions.

*Being Female:* “Under the domain of this agency that this is definitely a female dominant agency” stated Kumico. As implied in Kumico’s notion of “female dominant,” at CPA there were far more female staff, clients, interns, volunteers, and board members

than their male counterparts. Female domination at CPA also emerged in the interviews through (a) the frequency of norms related to feminine gendered communication styles such as being caring and nurturing, and (b) the appropriateness of matching sex of clients and staff with female staff assisting female clients. Kumico expressed “women working together may require certain amount of cautiousness or caring and which is so natural to me that I do not see much of the difficulty or anything around it.” Adan commented on the dominance of female qualities as in “Gender difference, social work, so uh, kinda like an alternative paradigm. It’s mainly a more feminine type of work. So I as a male coming in there I feel a little awkward.” At the other level, George praised the privileging of a feminine perspective.

Of course! Gender difference is always the big issue, because we have like female clients more than male clients and of course female clients mostly they are involved with domestic violence or court, or real estate arguments, things like that. And of course I’m male and I am not gonna be able to go to court with them or talk with them, you know, because they are scared, they’re scared.

I started at CPA around the same time with two interns, Dung and George. I witnessed several instances of Kumico assigning more work to Dung in the presence of George. At one point she turned to George and said, “Oh, it’s because you are a handsome man.” Sometimes the work that Dung was assigned involved her earning monetary compensation, and George remarked that, “And she got paid you know, for being like an assistant for the agency. And I don’t.” When working with female clients in abusive relationships with males, matching sex of clients with that of their staff was intentional to prevent and alleviate problematic interactions around gender norms.

*Levels of Agency:* As dominance relates to the negotiation and circulation of influence, the contextually contingent dominant status positions implicated differential

levels of agency among the interviewed participants. While CPA may be female dominant internally, issues at the forefront of CPA like domestic violence and gambling are tied to patriarchal social structures. The clients' descriptions that I discussed earlier as "unlucky," "burdensome," "abused," "need to protected" suggested their lower levels of individual agency and perceived lack of control in their situations. Also, CPA staff's assumptions about clients' levels of individual agency greatly affected and constrained the productivity of CPA. Assumptions about "the clients as victims and need to be protected" influenced the services provided and the relationships cultivated. These, in turn, function to foster dependence.

The staff described their intention to enable clients to do things on their own, but disagreed on what activities were suited for the clients; their orientations were grounded in their different assumptions about those clients' levels of individual agency in positions of victimization. One particular instance dealt with Rachana's request to implement consciousness-raising groups with the clients. She explained:

The clashes came out in things like they won't let me have the consciousness-raising groups because it violates confidentiality of these women. But unless I can bring them together, for me consciousness-raising is the therapy. There is no other therapy. Because for me it is always from the personal to the political.

The majority of staff with counseling backgrounds believed that putting the clients together violated their confidentiality and that the clients would not benefit from critically exploring their situations with one another. In fact, none of the interviewed clients had seen or interacted with one another, and their inputs about programs or services were rarely asked. The clashes between Rachana and the other staff evidenced different assumptions about clients' levels of individual agency.



What's needed in CPA may be recognition that the role of racial politics and patriarchal systems contribute to oppression of the Asian women clients as well as acknowledge that positioning clients as helpless victims removes their individual agency and encourages over-reliance on CPA. Furthermore, a possible reality, as Megan put it, is that CPA may not be around forever.

We're gonna been gone one of these days. I hope we're not gone as an agency, but one day we're gonna terminate services, so they're gonna have to learn how to do these things.

Overall, the ways that status relationships emerged, functioned, and were negotiated were contextually enabled and constrained by the dominant discursive construction of CPA's work as a counseling-providing agency that served Asian women clients. All the clients' status positions emerged from experiences of marginalization. The clients are constructed as victims by broader social discourses and by the dominant status voices in CPA whose claims were naturalized as the norm. Sias (2009) contends that "Hierarchy is a defining characteristic of organizations" (p. xi). While the designations of differential roles and minority-majority relations construct organizational hierarchy, I argue it is the consequences of the hierarchy on the organizational missions that is critical. In CPA's case, one of the key questions is—Do the consequences of the status hierarchy facilitate or hinder the work to advocate and empower underserved Asian clients?

### ***Outcomes of Negotiating Status Hierarchy and Relationships***

The dialectics of similarity/difference and dependence/independence characterized the relationship negotiations at CPA. What cut across the ways that these dialectics were handled were (a) the privileging of relational harmony and (b) the

naturalizing of status hierarchies that functioned to dilute tensions and silence non-confirmatory views or minority voices.

*Privileging Relational Harmony:* Relational harmony at CPA promoted ideas of balance and moderation that discouraged people from “rocking the boat” so to speak and tended to privilege one end of the dialectical tension over the other as Jane described below:

I just switch off whenever I leave the office. I am quite a calm person and I don't talk very much. I am able to process thoughts. Another gift that I have is I don't hold grudge. Of course, there are tensions, but I let them go. By temperament and training, I can easily do that. When I work here, I am Jane. When I go home, I just switch off.

Being even-tempered and agreeable were constructed as the norms of proper conducts at CPA. For example, Kumico believed that the clients with high anxiety would want to talk to people at CPA that “seem to smile well” and “seem easy to talk to.” Thus, as prescribed by staff like Kumico and Jane, the dominant norm at CPA was to smile and help.

The belief in relational harmony promoted participants to be agreeable and discourage negativities or conflicts. On the surface, George's comment exemplified the “correct things” to say as he remarked: “Everybody is so nice. We treat them as friends, absolutely no power, status, or topics like that—. We are there working together. We help clients. We are supposed to help each other.” In realities, negativities and conflicts did exist but were just tolerated and silenced. When I asked Iago if she had ever expressed her feeling of not being heard to her fellow board members, her response was:

No, I never have discussed that. And then if I say that, they're going to try to overcorrect. You know what I mean?...So they may try to listen, even if they really don't think it's a good idea. They may just overcompensate.

Prescribed by the dominance of relational harmony, people were supposed to be agreeable. Overall, the dominance of relational harmony functioned to privilege one end of the relational dialectics, discourage conflicts, and further marginalize voices in the minority as evidenced in the exclusion of different voices (i.e., Rachana's voice of wanting to implement consciousness-raising groups, Iago's voice as a business professional, and to certain extent Adan and George's voices as males). What is ignored is the understanding of intercultural relationships as dynamic, changing, and holistic processes (Martin & Nakayama, 1999), in which disagreements are common.

*Naturalizing Status Hierarchies:* The overall ineffective or one-sided handling of dialectics at CPA seemed to be enabled and constrained by the naturalizing of status hierarchies. As Kumico prescribed, power and responsibilities always resided in the staff members in the higher status positions. This static view of status hierarchies seemed to function to disable individuals in the lower status positions such as the volunteers and clients from taking responsibilities for their own actions at CPA. For instance, Adan said that "So, volunteering is a good thing, but I didn't think I was needed. So I became inactive, you know."

As a professor in family studies, Zach acknowledged the prevalence of hierarchy in Asian societies and at CPA and also cautioned not to underestimate the influence of hierarchy. He explained:

One thing I think is important in terms of Asian society—I'm talking like the two things that 'how the center is going to work' and 'how we understand the culture'—so in Asian society, hierarchy is more prevalent than empowerment I should say. And that's the thing since we live in the U.S. this is our adjustment that we are trying to make. We are trying to mix it well. We do not necessarily underestimate the influence of hierarchy, but at the same we also need to work on empowerment, so that women and children they also get their due shares and position in society, in the family. That is important.

Despite such awareness, status hierarchies at CPA were mostly taken for granted and naturalized. In turn, relationship negotiations at CPA often functioned to subjugate, instead of empower, individuals in the lower status positions. One example of this effect is that one interviewee never felt comfortable enough to disclose experiences as “a victim of hate crimes in the military” as the person described said in response to my question about why if this was ever disclosed to anyone at CPA:

I told them [the staff], I said, ‘Hey I was a victim.’ But I never said I was a rape victim...I guess I wasn’t confident. I was new to the agency. And I don’t wanna just reveal like very deep personal information.

As a space for the underserved Asians, it was problematic that a rape victim did not feel comfortable enough to discuss this experience in this space.

### **Discourse, Ideology, and Reproduction of Social Order**

The fourth research question inquires about the ideological implications of interview discourses and organizational documents related to productivity, group relations, and the broader social order. Mumby (1988) argues that examining organizational communication and narratives as ideological provides insight into the ways in which symbolic structures shape organizational reality and dominant power interests are co-opted. Similarly, Fairclough (1995a) describes critical discourse analysis (CDA) as aiming to investigate how discursive practices are ideologically shaped by power relations and power struggles to secure power and hegemony. I address this question by interpreting the ideologies, social practices, and structural (re)productions underlying the contextual factors named and identified by the participants. Finally, I discuss the larger social order that are reproduced or kept intact.

### *Ideologies about Organizational Productivity*

Underlying the competing discourses about the work of CPA, a dominant view emerged and functioned ideologically about how CPA would be more productive. This view also worked to mask and silence any contradictory views and voices. Specifically, the dominant belief indicated that “Individual crisis counseling is our priority.” This ideological belief functioned to focus on personal situations, crisis counseling and to exclude attention to immigration policies and the global context of interracial marriage.

*Individual Crisis Counseling is Our Priority:* Taken together, the discursive constructions of CPA across the three status groups depicted CPA as an agency that best provided client-based services to help underserved Asian women to overcome their difficulties. Combined with the dominance of individual counseling as represented by the female counseling staff, CPA is really an agency that was equipped and preferred to solve the women clients’ immediate difficulties with the individualized approach of counseling combined with case management. In meeting the short-term needs of the clients served, CPA was quite effective at that given the resources available. Kumico commented below on her pride in achieving that:

What I like about this agency is that so many Asians who live in this metro area need this agency, and this agency is definitely made life change for some of our clients during difficult times of their lives. And the—I like about that and I am proud of it.

The ways that this ideology enabled and constrained the work of CPA were that it prioritized the immediate needs of the clients, neglected long term outcomes, and gave little attention to the structural conditions such as immigration policies and norms for interracial/international marriages between White U.S. males and Asian females.

Given this dominant organizational ideology, CPA paid little attention to immigration policies and reforms that enabled and constrained the productivity of CPA, particularly policies regarding non-citizens as victims of crimes. At CPA's main office, there were brochures in three languages (i.e., English, Chinese, and Vietnamese) concerning a special type of legal immigrant status for non-citizen crime victims called "U-visa." Under the U-visa program, a non-citizen victim of certain crimes who cooperates with law enforcement could apply for temporary legal immigrant status. Once granted a U-visa, the person can live and work in the United States for three years and then becomes eligible for applying for permanent resident status. At CPA, this U-visa program was most relevant for victims of domestic violence who were married to U.S. citizens. Though CPA still advertised the U-visa program, Megan informed me that the program had been stopped but was under discussion to be reinstated by the Obama administration.

The U-visa program served as an example of how immigration policies enabled and constrained the productivity of CPA. For instance, Megan shared the example of clients who decided to stay in abusive relationships in order to obtain their permanent resident status. Under the U-visa program, CPA could have advised the clients of their option to apply for the U-visa. Immigration policies affect an agency like CPA as Megan explained:

They (The clients) were on the brink of becoming citizens but then they were strong enough to leave their violent relationship. Like they knew if they left they would lose their status...I kinda feel bad knowing that some of them are staying just to get that status. It's like, what if we were able to change that, I mean like the U-Visa and stuff, but that takes a while.

The dominant organizational ideology at CPA also diverted attention away from the larger sociopolitical contexts behind many of the Asian women clients who were married to White U.S. males. One of the clients that I interviewed, Yuru, ended up moving back to live with her White husband after having received counseling and referral services from CPA and obtaining her own space in a shelter. One thing Yuru repeatedly expressed to me was her fear of not being able to obtain green cards and U.S. citizenships for her teenage daughter and herself. Somehow she believed, if she had kept on receiving free services from CPA, she would be considered a burden to the U.S. society and this deterred her from obtaining her green card and citizenship. Yuru expressed:

Some people have green cards or citizenship and they say that, ‘In America, if you become a burden to Americans, American government does not like this type of people to come to America. If you cannot even produce yourself, the American government has to constantly help or rescue you. Then who wants this kind of people?’

Part of the context for this type of interracial/international marriage was the economic dimension that resulted in unions of Asian females from lower economic conditions marrying White U.S. males. Rachana alluded that many of the women served by CPA were mail-order brides from Southern Asia escaping economic oppression.

Rachana considered those marriages human trafficking as she stated:

And if they [the women served] can’t work, I mean I am not even talking about equality, I am just talking about basic fundamental needs, if they can’t provide for their housing etc, they would end up in another same basic situation. Because the problem with women is they do not control the mode of production. So, their only economic opportunity for most of these women is marriage. And I frankly consider it, this is why I am not allowing you to say it [to others at CPA], because it is a very conservative institute. I think this is trafficking, not marriage. See I can’t say that here in CPA, because it is such a bad word.

At the beginning of the interview, Rachana explicitly asked me not to share the critiques she verbalized in the context of this dissertation with members affiliated with CPA. Her

request seems to reflect her minority view and voices in CPA. If the other staff accepted Rachana's view of treating the women served as victims of international human trafficking, CPA would have to confront the geopolitical and economic conditions that brought those women to the United States. Hence, Rachana's view was denied since it contradicts the dominant counseling and case management model at CPA. Without dealing with the global and social conditions with which the women served have battled, the individualized approach of counseling and case management seems to provide just short-term relief.

### ***Ideologies about Group Relations***

In the public discourse, CPA was an Asian-based agency for all Asians in a minority-majority state where there were reported 1.7% of Asians and Pacific Islanders in 2006 and 2.7% Asians in 2008 residing in the metropolitan city where CPA is based. The legitimacy of CPA rested on its uniqueness in serving all Asians, Asian Americans, and Asian immigrants in contrast to the other organizations in the city (e.g., Citizens Alliances for Chinese Americans, Saigon Temple, and Indian Association) that served specific Asian ethnic groups, such as Chinese Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Asian Indian Americans, Filipino Americans, Japanese Americans, etc. In practice, CPA predominantly served Asian immigrant women from selective Asian countries such as Vietnam, Japan, and China. CPA's contested Asian-ness surfaced in comments from volunteers and was rarely questioned. This may be due to ideological beliefs about unification of Asians and individual meritocracy.



*As Asians, We should be a Unified Group:* This excerpt below from Adan summarized this imaginary of a unified Asian coalition that ought to consist of different Asian ethnic groups in the communities.

In my mind there is an intertwined network between Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese coming together as a sub-community within the Southwest or this metropolitan area... The way it hits me is like we're such a small population here that we don't really have the voice or privilege to do a lot of things. We're limited to the resources that we can have...: I know how it is to be Asian. Despite that we're all different, I want us to be all united as human beings.

Underlying Adan's comment was this ideology of a unified Asian community in which all Asians should get along, work together, and form a cohesive team. As Adan stated, a unified Asian group has the practical advantage of accentuating the visibility and presence of Asians in the United States, which then translates into more resources and increased political legitimacy. Yuru echoed this belief in the power of numbers, "Chinese people say that 'There is strength in numbers.'" Experientially, this Asian unification discourse is reinforced by the shared daily experiences of being racialized as Asians in the United States. Despite competing discourses of inter-Asian rivalry as voiced by some participants, the dominance of the Asian unification discourse evident in mission statements as well as from the center's coordinator becomes taken for granted and functions to silence or marginalize any dissenting voices that say otherwise.

The discursive move of lumping of all immigrants from the so-called Asian region is rooted in the historical context of U.S. multicultural identity politics. Historically, the term "Asian Americans" emerged from the civil rights movement to reflect a consciousness of Americans of Asian ancestry (Ling, 2008) and a pan-Asian American identity was developed in the 1960s and 1970s with a focus on the shared struggles of Asians as minorities in the United States (Louie, 2008). However, the label

of “Asian” itself was “produced through a broader set of discourses stemming from the history of U.S. involvement in Asia and its hegemonic definition of Asia as a region” (Dirlik as cited in Louie, 2008, p. 202). Rooted in this history, the use of the term Asian has the unintended effect of perpetuating the racial category of Asian (American) as the only legitimate and recognized minority groups and masking the increasing diversification of Asian (American) communities in the United States (Ling, 2008; Louie, 2008).

In addition to Asians, “Orientals” is another term of identification used by one participant, Iago, when she talked about her unpleasant experience of going to Vietnamese-run stores, “Oh, if I go to the person who deals with Orientals here, that would be great.” The term the “Orient” is rooted in the colonial histories of Western/European imperialism that dominated the others in the East. For Said (1979), the orient is a “semi-mythical construct” that has no ontological stability but a representation that grew out of European sensitivity toward a geographical region called the East (p. xviii). As a project of humanism, Said’s “Orientalism” started from the Anglo-French-American experiences of subordinating and restructuring the Arabs and Islam in the Middle/Near East. Iago’s equating being Asian with being Oriental in the United States is symbolic in linking the shared histories of marginalization and subordination in this ambiguous geographical region of the former East/Orient and Asia today.

The Asian-unification ideology was discursively produced by histories underlying the terms “Asian (American)” and “the Orientals.” Reciprocally, the Asian-unification ideology legitimated CPA’s existence, and CPA’s work and identity reproduced the unification ideology. However, there seemed to be little recognition and acknowledgment

in CPA of the histories of shared struggles with domination and subordination among Asians in the U.S, which may be key to CPA's work of empowering Asians.

In social practice, this discursively produced ideology of Asian unification functioned in CPA to dilute or deny any differences and erase hierarchical status positions that were produced. For example, most participants were quick to express that "I just don't care what people say about me" as George said. Also, conditioned by the Asian-unification ideology, the staff/interns/volunteers in CPA rendered trivial or denied the class and educational differences between them and their clients. Once denied, the opportunities to explore the ways that differences may hinder or facilitate the work of CPA were lost. Moreover, the ideology of "Asians should be a unified group" rendered invisible the divergent historical, political, and social conditions facing different Asian groups in the United States. The historical contexts suggest that what can provide the pivotal point of uniting Asians in the United States may be their shared histories of marginalization.

*Be yourself; be an individual:* What seemed to govern the emerged types of individualistic avowals and problematic ascriptions in CPA was this ideology of individual rights to be and do in unique ways reflecting independence and developing individuality in the United States. Such belief penetrated all status groups and was reinforced by the individualistic approach of counseling combined with case management that was dominant in CPA. Kumico's comments below regarding the importance of the clients' feeling comfortable and being able to "manage as much as they can" illustrate this ideology.

Definitely client needs to feel really comfortable in our agency and they are allocated the needed help. However, with information and with the kind of

referral or our direct support, the clients gain the skills and power to be able to manage as much as they can.

Given the broader context of the dominance of individualism in public and political discourses around immigration and multiculturalism in the United States, links between individualism and success are not surprising. One of the problematic consequences is that this ideology of entitlement to be unique encouraged the participants to blame either their Asian cultural roots or their collectivist orientation for their victimization.

When Sabal analyzed her situation, she quickly blamed her parents' and their collectivistic mindset for her having to put on a façade growing up in India. In contrast, she came to embrace developing her individuality such as "I can be myself" and "I am entitled to feel" through her counseling sessions with Jane. Sabal explained:

My parents, I always give them what they wanted. There was a façade always that I put on for other people. So I was just so used to it. I didn't, what I am trying to say is that I never thought that I felt bad. I never realized that. So when I came here, then I realized ... Yeah. It's okay. You can be yourself, you know. I thought all my life I had to have façade for each person...I understand the fact that I can be myself. And Jane alludes to that too. Maybe I had really bad ideas, but she doesn't say, 'They are wrong.' She said, 'You are entitled to feel that way, but then how about looking at it from a different point of view?'

By making her Indian-ness the scapegoat of her problems, Sabal was encouraged by her counseling session with Jane to assimilate and adopt the ideology of individual choice.

Conditioned by the ideology of individual meritocracy, Yuru knew that she needed to "work hard to succeed" but later recanted and quickly made her own diffidence the scapegoat when realizing she somehow had not yet succeeded. She said:

The way I think of myself is that I feel no matter what kind of difficulties I encounter I tell myself to work hard to succeed. However, honestly I don't have a lot of confidence in myself. I feel that first I am not like other women who know everything. I feel that I don't know anything such as fixing a flat tire, changing oil, changing a tire.

What is notable is the description of women who “knew everything” and can take care of their own cars, as the standard to which Yuru aspired. What was left out was the global and structural conditions such as patriarchy and the globalization of whiteness (R. L. Allen, 2001) that constrained Yuru’s levels of individual agency as an unemployed Chinese woman with a teenage daughter from her previous marriage. Though Yuru worked hard, she did not succeed in gaining independence from her White U.S. husband, nor did she live the American dream that she hope and imagined. Yuru’s individual agency was co-opted with limitations placed by the unequal social systems such as patriarchy and white supremacy and the geopolitical relations between the United States and China. As an unemployed Chinese woman in her mid 40s living in the United States, Yuru’s choices and actions for social mobility were ideologically and structurally enabled and constrained.

For the volunteers, individual efforts facilitated their assimilation into the dominant U.S. norms and led them to criticize differences as due to the deficiency of their Asian roots. George talked about his desire for more doing “whatever I want” and blamed his Asian roots for requiring him to sacrifice his freedom.

I like half of it [Chinese educational system]. I hate the other half. I like it because I have the goal set. I had to go for college and take the exam. I studied like from freshman year on, like really hard every day. And what I don’t like about it is it takes away a lot of time from everything else -- less free time, less time to do whatever I want, you know.

Overall, the ideology of individual meritocracy normalized and naturalized the participants’ striving for independence and individuality in the United States at the expense of their Asian roots and functioned to cast those who had not strived to do so as lacking success, abnormal and deficient. Also, individual meritocracy assumed that

everyone could achieve independence and individuality just by working hard and masked the unequal social systems that placed limitations on some more than others.

*We must Protect Asians' Model Minority Image:* What seemed to support and emerge from the ways that status hierarchies and relationships were negotiated in CPA was an ideology of protecting and upholding Asians as the model minority in the United States. The emerged status hierarchy based on higher educational levels in particular perpetuated Asians as the model minority with “academic prowess” (Wu, 2002, p. 43) and naturalized the domination of individuals with higher educational levels. Then, the privileging and overemphasizing of similarity and formality functioned to police all Asians to discipline themselves as well as one another to uphold the model minority image. Also, CPA’s not publicly stating its implicit advocacy agenda of empowering underserved Asians might problematically further subjugate the marginalized clients it aimed to serve and limit its capacity to realize its advocacy goals.

In this study, the academic prowess of the model minority stereotype was most emphasized and expected to be upheld. Adan commented below on the “degrading” feeling he got from reaching out to nail shops and restaurants run by Vietnamese and Chinese who failed to uphold the academic accomplishment standard expected of them:

It seems the way it hits me is like we’re such a small population here that we don’t really have the voice or privilege to do a lot of things. We’re limited to the resources that we can have. If we ask for help, we’re limited to the nail shops that have less than us. To me, that’s kind of a down point... You kinda feel degraded or less valuable... So to me that’s a stereotype. You should be able to go to big corporations and maybe ask for donations, so they can support your organization and you know you can have them advertised as one of the sponsors. But I feel like they might shy away from that because ‘Who cares? Asians!’ you know—Why can’t we go to Intel and have them support or the mayor of the city?

Asian immigrants skilled in painting nails and serving Asian delicacies were considered a negative resource even though they could and did enjoy high levels of socioeconomic stability from their businesses. So, what was really “degrading” about those Asians, as Adan described, stemmed from the fact that they did not fit the model minority stereotype of the academically successful Asian Americans as doctors, scientists, and professionals.

Under the model minority stereotype, those Asians who did not uphold that image were easily sanctioned and construed as “deficient” by other Asians and sometimes by themselves as well. Given that the immigrant women served by CPA were dealing with issues such as domestic violence, they were especially vulnerable to be subjugated and blamed for not upholding that seeming favorable image of Asians. The following excerpt from Thi illustrates this vulnerability.

I don't know. With Vietnamese, I don't know how. I would not be comfortable. You know before Joan some people helped me to go to the hospital somewhere. It was okay. At the hospital, they asked me who the father was. I said, 'He is not the father.' Some Vietnamese looked at me and thought I was bad. Before I divorced my husband, six month after I came to this city I went to the shelter. Some people didn't understand me, 'What happened with him?' They thought I was a widow and bad. They didn't understand. After that, I got back together with him and they understood me. Yeah.

Though the model minority image appears favorable or positive of Asians and Asian Americans, this stereotype in reality functions to mask disparities within Asian/Asian American communities and taunt other minority groups such as blacks to match up with the model of Asians (S. J. Lee, 1996; Ling, 2008; Wu, 2002).

Embedded in the discursive constructions of CPA was a dominant ideology about the work of CPA: “To deal with women clients’ immediate problems, individual counseling combined with case management is the best.” Given the genesis, resources, and expertise available to CPA, this ideology seemed to make sense. However, the

privileging of an individualized approach greatly enabled and constrained the productivity of CPA by rendering irrelevant the larger global context of increasing interracial/international marriages between White males and Asian females as well as the social and political context of immigration policies in the United States.

***Ideologies, Power Relations, and Reproduction of Social Order***

By juxtaposing the discursively produced ideologies that enabled and constrained the work of CPA and group relations and identities, I consider the larger social order that is reproduced. First, the ideologies of Asian unification, individual meritocracy, and conforming to model minority stereotype reproduced Asian immigrants as subjugated and racialized subjects and may function to perpetuate white supremacy in U.S. multicultural identity politics. Second, the organizational beliefs steeped in an ideology of productivity due to individualism, reproduced Asian women clients as dependent and marginalized victims of the patriarchal system on the one hand, and able to solve their problems through individual efforts, on the other.

The discursive space of CPA positioned the Asian immigrant participants in a particular way that reproduced themselves as subjugated and racialized Asians. The ideologies that produced CPA created this discursive space where the participants had to make sense of the meaning(s) of Asian-ness. The ideology of Asian unification interpolated the participants to see themselves and each other as fitting into this arbitrarily racialized category of Asian. Then, the ideologies of individual meritocracy and upholding Asian's model minority image conditioned the racialized Asian immigrant subjects to understand Asian-ness specifically in the terms of overcoming their personal difficulties at any cost and working hard to succeed in achieving individuality and



independence. By racializing and subjugating themselves through these particular lenses, the Asian immigrant subjects participated in the reproduction of a racialized hierarchy. Given that White males were the perpetrators in abusive relationships, whiteness and patriarchy in the broader social order are acting to perpetuate clients' problematic lives.

The work of CPA with racialized Asian women clients seemed to end up reproducing the unequal social system of patriarchy through its individualized approach that only provided short-term relief. CPA's approach of individual counseling combined with individual case management had the unintended effect of reproducing the Asian women clients as dependent on CPA instead of empowering them to gain independence. Without offering any classes or trainings where the women clients could acquire skills and critical consciousness to better navigate the social systems in the United States, or develop their own mechanisms of social support, they lacked the means to become independent. Providing short-term relief in the name of advocacy may act to mislead the women clients about what they are really capable of. Without means for independence, the Asian women clients were reproduced in dependent positions of being taken care of.

Both racial and patriarchal dimensions were implicated in the work of CPA through the Asian women clients' relationships with White males. Megan discussed the prevalence of White American male perpetrators in the work of CPA and how her American identity was often looked down in CPA through association with them.

Being American but a lot of that is kinda like in a way looked down [here at CPA]... Well because the perpetrator is American. They're [the other staff] like, 'Oh the American perpetrator.' So like, 'Is he White?' 'Yea' 'White male perpetrator mainly.'... Yea. It's mainly Vietnamese staying together, but then the other ones are mainly with like the White male marrying Asian wives... Right. 'Oh, it's gonna be a tough case because the perpetrator is White American. Ugh. It's gonna be hard.' Because he'll have money, you know.

CPA as an Asian-based agency primarily serving women seemed compressed in the intersecting space between whiteness and patriarchy. Both whiteness and patriarchy enabled and constrained the existence and work of CPA. Thus, by not addressing the unequal systems of whiteness and patriarchy, CPA cannot really fulfill the mission of “ensuring the rights and well-being of all Asians and Asian Americans.”

Yuru’s example was indicative of CPA’s unintended reproduction of racialized, subjugated, and dependent Asian women clients. Yuru went back to live with her abusive White husband but acknowledged that part of her still feared her husband might repeat the abuse. However, she needed his financial support to finish her associate degree. In her estimation, getting her associate degree was the only acceptable way to gain economic independence, because she would rather not work as a waitress at her age. Yuru’s calculation and choice to move back to live with her abusive husband reflected CPA’s failure to increase her levels of individual agency through the services she had received.

## **CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR HISPANIC WOMEN**

In this chapter, I present findings from the second research site, Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW). First, I set the scene through a contextualized background about SEHW based on accessible archival documents, relevant interview responses, and available website materials. This background information is followed by a brief discussion of my relationship with SEHW as part of the context. Then, I organize and relate the interpreted discursive themes to the four proposed research questions.

### **Background on Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW)**

#### ***Background of Establishing SEHW***

Sandra, a MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) graduate with a Master's degree in City Planning, founded the Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW) with the help of Pratibha and Sister Brooks early in February 1994. Sandra built SEHW on the concept of "women-driven production" that she developed from her experiences of adapting the Prof. Muhammad Yunus' Grameen Bank model to create self-employment opportunities for low-income African American women in Chicago. Also, Sandra drew inspiration from Pratibha's success of integrating business and development for women in India. Pratibha first organized "sewing co-ops in different neighborhoods around Mumbai" and then founded a NPO based in Chicago to market those handworks produced in India (Personal Communication, September 23, 2009). Originally, Sandra intended to collaborate with Patribha to start a domestic site for Patribha's NPO in the U.S. Southwest after Sandra moved there with her husband. However, in the process of volunteering and approaching different people to approve a loan for the site, Sandra witnessed disproportionate poverty among women and children and decided to start a

sewing project for low-income women instead. The SEHW's core of creating intergenerational wealth through women-driven production was rooted in Sandra's belief that, "Nobody was necessarily all entrepreneur or all designer, but if you brought people together and broke down their isolations you could both have impact on their abilities to earn income and on their family's stability."

### ***Initial Establishment***

The start-up of SEHW had profound impact on and shapes SEHW today as one of the interviewees, Janet, said, "I don't think if you could really get SEHW now without understanding its beginning." Sandra first approached Sister Lucy with the idea of starting a women's economic development project and was referred to Sister Brooks at the San Garcia Parish. Her parish catered to Spanish-speaking Catholics in a predominantly low-income area and served many new immigrants from Mexico. Sister Brooks remarked on the referral, "Lucy said [to Sandra], 'You don't wanna work with these women. They are the Heights' people. You wanna work with Sister Brooks down at San Garcia.'" At the San Garcia Parish, Sandra made her announcement through an interpreter—Sandra didn't speak Spanish at the time—in a mass. Sandra said, "If you know how to sew or embroider and you want to start the project, come to the meeting." The next Monday about 75 women showed up. Besides San Garcia Parish, some of the women came from two advocacy groups, one working to ensure immigrants' rights and the other working against domestic violence. Since then, immigrants have been the primary base of SEHW's employees. In early 2009, 90% of SEHW employees<sup>28</sup> and their families were Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants with low incomes. During an

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<sup>28</sup> This is based on an untitled document that was emailed to me from former president of the board, Angela, on March 13, 2009.

interview, Fonda, production supervisor, commented that 95% of the employees were immigrants.

The initial establishment of SEHW and its history influences norms for relating among the women in another way. Among the interviewees, five of them have been with SEHW since its beginning: Sandra, Sister Brooks, Fonda, Dora, and Lani. A critical moment in the formation of SEHW was when Sandra asked interested women to volunteer three weeks of their time to learn sewing on commercial machines with an agreement of paying several dollars above minimum wage for part-time work after the training period. Then 25 women made the commitment. San Garcia Church provided free space for SEHW three days a week from its initial establishment till 1996 in a large room where the cutting table and sewing machines could be set up. Every Friday afternoon, the women had to put away all the equipment and materials, including the clunky and heavy machines. These events, though challenging, helped the women to bond and reinforced the importance of commitment and hard work in SEHW.

Establishing an onsite daycare program in the first few months of SEHW was instrumental in developing the SEHW's identity as a social enterprise with two sides: production and programs. The onsite daycare was created to help employees meet their challenges as young mothers with small children. The first report to funders listed a line item of paying two daycare providers at the wage of \$6 dollars per hour for 16 hours per week. Both managers and employees had their children spend time at the daycare including Sandra's own two sons, which helped to foster a bond between them. Throughout the years, different social programs were developed organically with the support of grants to meet the various needs and challenges of the women producers and

helped established SEHW as a nonprofit business with a social mission. For instance, SEHW responded to the employees' health-related needs and published a bilingual manual for healthcare services in both English and Spanish with the subtitle of: "A Manual of Healthcare Services for our Uninsured Spanish-speaking Community."

### ***Mission and Vision***

I synthesize below the missions and visions of the SEHW based on historical documents from executive director, Sandra, and former president of the board, Angela. I also draw from two teaching cases written about SEHW (Case A, 1994-2005, and Case B, 2005-2008) by Janet and her graduate assistant.

*Mission:* Over the course of 15 years, SEHW negotiated and developed its identity as a social enterprise with a social mission. The first funding proposal dated February 3, 1994, depicted SEHW with a mission to "provide low income women with the ability to earn consistent income to support themselves and their families." In a community outreach brochure dated July 17, 1994, the SEHW was described as an organization that produced "sewing creations advertised in catalogs" and enabled employees to work with "self-confidence and a feeling of accomplishment." In spring 2006, its fund-raising packet presented SEHW as a NPO with a double bottom line agenda: (a) a social mission to "enhance dignity in the lives of families" and (b) an operational mission to "serve the outsourced production needs of nationwide customers in the soft goods and glass mosaic tile industries." In 2008, its brochure depicted SEHW as a manufacturing business with a social mission to "end poverty and create intergenerational wealth." In 2009, SEHW was described with a social mission "to create dignified living wage jobs for women in the state through a sustainable manufacturing

social enterprise that engages its employees, customers and the community in building strong families.”

*Vision:* The vision of SEHW also evolved over the years. The first funding proposal featured a vision of “women-driven production” that honored employees’ needs and prioritized designs that revolved around “the skill level of the producers, not the other way around.” Between 1996 and 1998, the available documents featured a vision of “empowerment of women” and “creating good jobs” in terms of both employment and personal development. In 2008, SEHW developed a vision to “build intergenerational wealth by engaging women as leaders in dynamic social enterprises that move them to transform their families and communities.

### ***Funding Sources***

The initial funding for SEHW came from grants, loans, and donations. The first financial source for SEHW was a loan approved by a state-run Community Development Loan Fund that not only provided an initial revolving line of credit for SEHW to purchase needed equipment but also allowed SEHW to operate as a fiscal agency of the fund. Between May 1995 and April 1997, SEHW received its initial grant of \$150,000 from a private foundation based in Michigan that enabled SEHW to become a NPO. The private foundation continued to support SEHW till the end of 2005. In early 2005, SEHW accepted a grant of \$25,000 per year from a social venture consulting group and started a new partnership.

Besides grants and donations, SEHW has also generated and increased incomes through its business. In 1995, SEHW had contract revenues of \$49,532 from sewing and embroidery contracts and projects that were primarily consumed by existing clients of

Pratihba's organization. Over the years, Sandra and the staff continued to find clients at national and regional gift shows as well as contacts with local entrepreneurs. By 2004, SEHW's contract revenues of \$513,937 surpassed revenues from grants and donations of \$446,829. At its peak in 2008, SEHW had contract revenues of more than one million dollars (= \$1,161,000). Despite the current recession that has forced SEHW to downsize, the continuing goal is to work toward becoming a self-sufficient nonprofit business that does not rely on grants and donations.

### ***Business Operations***

The space in San Garcia Parish enabled SEHW to take on small-scale sewing and embroidery projects that allowed several months of part-time production. By 1996, the women were mastering the art of sewing and began thinking about full-time employment, which meant SEHW needed a permanent full-time location. With a grant from the city government, SEHW moved to a 2400 square foot location not far from the church. With the move in 1996, SEHW was able to provide full-time employment (35 hours/week) for 25 low-income Hispanic women. Between 1998 and 2003, SEHW provided full-time (40 hours/week) work for 20-25 women.

As SEHW continued to grow, its location could no longer accommodate growth into different production lines. With the help from its partner and donations, SEHW successfully moved to a 13,000 square foot facility located in a warehouse area of the city and SEHW has been located there since August 1, 2005. Ironically, this facility was a former women's prison. This four times bigger facility offers a number of features that were not available in the former location for both production and programs such as: larger open work spaces for sewing, handwork and glass, fabric printing, shipping and



receiving and a dedicated second floor for program implementation. As a result, SEHW was able to increase production space, engineer more efficient workflow, and add new equipment. All of these improvements enabled increases in revenue until the end of 2008.

At its peak in 2008, SEHW employed 48 low-income Hispanic women. However, affected by the global economic recession at the end of 2008, SEHW started to cut back full-time employment and laid off women employees due to lack of contracts. At the time of this project, SEHW was downsized to part-time employment for about 12 production women. The process of laying off production women happened gradually and collaboratively as Sandra remarked: “We decided as a group who would be laid off... Basically it was really hard, except the work went away. So, it’s not like you are firing somebody.” At first, the staff tried to keep all production employees by having everyone work part-time. However, at the point where the production employees could make more money receiving unemployment benefits than working part-time sporadically, then they were laid off. Even when they were not employed, a lot of the production women still came to SEHW to participate in classes and programs. All the interviewed production women who were laid off expressed their desire to come back and work for SEHW. As Dora, an employee, said, “I hope we have work this year. I hope we have a lot of work ‘cause we need to work and we need the money to continue the programs.”

Though the two sides of SEHW are not always balanced or integrated, SEHW strives to “maintain balanced growth in both elements” and gives attention to their double bottom line (i.e., operational mission and social mission). One example is an open book management system that was introduced in January 2006 to manage costs by sharing financial information with production staff (e.g., Fonda and Rhena), involving them in

solving problems, and sharing financial benefits of the solution with them as well. The open book management system not only helped the production staff to build leadership abilities but also helped SEHW to identify new business opportunities and increase revenues that in turn helped to expand programs. Another example is when the staff organized a luncheon in mid 2009 and brought back laid-off employees to check in and dialogue about the future. Kaya exclaimed about how such practice was simply unheard of in any business:

At that lunch they [both staff and production employees of SEHW] had to talk about how were people doing, what kind of services did they need, you know talking about SEHW and then what they thought was gonna happen in the future! That's unheard of!!!!

### ***Social Programs***

The social programming in SEHW had a very informal beginning as exemplified by the implementation of the onsite childcare program for only \$.25 per hour that I mentioned earlier. The way the childcare program got started reflected a focus to create and develop programs in response to the specific needs of the women employees. Alicia, the former program director, joined SEHW in 1998, four years after SEHW was formed. Sandra commented on Alicia's role in SEHW: "Alicia came on and started developing the programs from both her interest and the needs of the people here." Alicia was often considered the face of SEHW in the communities as she spearheaded and oversaw all aspects of the social programs in SEHW with the goal of creating family assets and intergenerational wealth.

Between 1994 and 2005, several different programs were developed as the children from the childcare program entered public schools. One of the most talked about programs is the ongoing "Good Families and Schools" program with the goal of

integrating families and schools and encouraging parental engagement. The employees are given paid leave to volunteer several hours each month in their children's classrooms. In addition, SEHW hosts regular dinner events each term with teachers, parents, and school representatives to discuss and identify challenges and opportunities. Besides the onsite childcare and the Good Families and Schools program, the other two ongoing programs are the "Adult Education" Program and the "Health and Well-being" Program that provides classes for employees to obtain GRD and U.S. citizenship and assist employees in establishing relationships with healthcare providers.

Between 2005 and 2008, SEHW invested more efforts to improve upon its social programming. Upon the recommendation of its partnering organization, SEHW launched a Strong Families Initiative in 2005 to rebrand all programs into one initiative and added a new Leadership Development Program related to employability. It aimed to "make a deeper investment in leadership to move some of the secondary leaders into primary leadership positions." In July 2005, Lucia was added on as new program manager to take on the responsibility of managing the programs so that Alicia could have time to design and implement and the open book management system. In 2006, SEHW expanded the Strong Families Initiative to increase its effectiveness and impact by launching a capital campaign called, "Investing in the Fabric of Strong Communities." In 2008, SEHW recast all existing programs into "a unique employee benefits package." "Creating Families Assets" was the umbrella title for all programs; they were defined to be strategies to both (a) create and provide "dignified work opportunities" and (b) develop "the individual capacity" of the members.

In 2009, a grant application was awarded to start an immigrant center to be spearheaded and directed by Alicia. Between July 2009 and December 2009, Alicia worked only part time in SEHW to prepare for her transitioning into her new role and responsibilities. During the meantime, the staff and the board looked for a new program director that was required to be fully bilingual and bi-literate in English and Spanish and have working experiences with community economic development issues affecting “low and moderate income families especially within the Spanish-speaking immigrant community.” In September 2009, Jenny came on board as the program director.

### **My relationship with SEHW**

My relationship with SEHW started when Angela, former president of the board, invited me to visit SEHW and met with Sandra and Alicia. In that meeting, I happened to mention the Grameen Bank model and questioned if the same model might apply in the United States, not knowing Sandra’s familiarity and background in issues of microcredit lending and economic development. Then, Sandra brought up the issue of SEHW’s need for an evaluation/impact analysis project and casually invited me to think about collaborating with SEHW on it. I was honored and intrigued but hesitated because of my inability to speak Spanish. I began looking around for financial assistance. With Alicia’s help, I applied and was awarded a \$3000 grant to help defray the cost of translation and interpretation for both conducting an impact analysis project for SEHW and my dissertation research. From that point onward, I became the graduate student researcher.

Between August 2008 and January 2010, I volunteered a total of 58 hours in preparing and executing the impact analysis project. To conduct the impact analysis project, I met with Sandra and Alicia several times to discuss ideas and get their

feedback. Sandra designated Lucia and Rhena to help me with identifying participants and arranging for three focus groups that I completed for the impact analysis project. As soon as I started the impact analysis project, Sandra included me on the email list that she used to communicate with the board of directors. Hence, I was regarded as a guest on the board and received all board-related correspondence and invitations such as board meetings and board retreats. Whenever appropriate, Sandra also invited me to different celebrations such as the annual Christmas party and retirement party for Sister Brooks.

Throughout my volunteering, I primarily interacted with staff members and indirectly with board of directors/members during board meetings and a retreat. With the production employees, I passed by and smiled at many of them whenever I was in SEHW but I didn't have direct contact with them except the six who participated in two of the focus groups. Through the impact analysis project, I also had the pleasure and opportunity of interacting with four founding members and employees, three of whom were no longer involved with SEHW.

Throughout my time with SEHW, I relied on Sandra, Alicia, Lucia, and Angela to help me gain access and accomplish my goals. Before Angela stepped down, she was instrumental in facilitating my obtaining the board's approval of this dissertation. As soon as I started the impact analysis project, Sandra and Alicia were crucial in filling me in about important background of SEHW and also in connecting me with volunteers such as Kate and Janet. In executing the focus groups for the impact analysis project, I relied on Rhena to recruit volunteers and I depended on Lucia to interpret and help facilitate the conversations. Overall, I felt connected to most of the staff and board members with whom I had the privilege of working in SEHW. I honor their commitment to social

justice, their openness to hearing different ideas, and their compassion toward each other. Several times I was offered snacks and food. Also, many of them generously offered me rides before I had a car.

In terms of recruiting participants for this dissertation, all the staff, board members, and volunteers that I contacted agreed to participate. The group that I was most apprehensive about recruiting was the production employees due to my inability to speak Spanish. I relied solely on Lucia to help me strategize, brainstorm, invite, and recruit production women that she felt would be available and interested in participating.

### **How Members of Three Status Groups Construct SEHW's Work and Identity**

The first research question asks how interview discourses from members of the three status groups (i.e., staff, board of directors/volunteers, and production employees) and organizational documents construct SEHW's work and identity. The results indicate that members of the three status groups and organizational documents similarly constructed SEHW as a NPO with two sides and/or dual missions, yet their choices of words suggest somewhat different understandings of SEHW as grounded in their divergent status positions in the organization. All the identified discursive themes described below reflect patterns of experiences that were dominant in each status group. The following are the themes that emerged: (a) participating staff members constructed SEHW as a manufacturing business with social programs led by Sandra for immigrant women employees with young children; (b) interviewed board of directors/volunteers constructed SEHW as a progressive nonprofit business that featured strong staff under Sandra's leadership, and employed "profile employees" of Mexican immigrants as Carla phrased it; (c) participating production employees constructed SEHW as a workplace

with daycare and flexibility that manufactured sewing-based work and offered women employment and opportunities for personal development; and (d) organizational documents consistently constructed SEHW to be a social business for low-income women (and their families).

### ***Staff Members***

The interviewed staff members primarily constructed SEHW as a manufacturing business led by Sandra with social programs for immigrant women with young children. The discursive themes related to the staff's construction of SEHW were: (a) SEHW = production business + social programs, (b) employer of immigrant women from Mexico with young children, and (c) an organization founded and led by Sandra.

*SEHW = Production Business + Social Programs:* All the interviewed staff constructed SEHW as an entity with two competing sides: production business and social programs. Overall, the staff viewed SEHW simultaneously as both a business that manufactured handmade design products and a NPO that provided social programs. Manufacturing , Worth (2009) suggests, is one of the three principle activities in which nonprofit business ventures engage, and the other two are services and retail. Historically, the business side of the SEHW had dominated whereas the social programs gradually gained recognition and legitimacy through increased awareness of the concept of *social enterprise*. Meadows and Pike (2010) define social enterprises as “organisations that use business methods to achieve social goals” (p. 127). The excerpt below from Kaya, a former employee and currently a board member, illustrates how the language of social enterprise helped SEHW to negotiate its two sides and (re)articulate its identity as an organization.

I think what has helped is having this whole kind of, more awareness of social enterprise growing just generally out there. That's helped us defining who we are. In the past from a communication's point of view, we always struggled like—Are we a business? Do we just talk about business? Do our clients only care about this as a business? Are we a non-profit and what does that mean? Is it confusing for business? ...But now we have this language of social enterprise, which really is about merging the two. So that has really helped us.

Though the identity as a social enterprise legitimized for the staff SEHW's pursuing dual missions, the process of functioning as a NPO with two sides, to most staff was messy and fraught with tensions. In the excerpt below Sandra defined social enterprise in the context of SEHW and described the messy process of trying to have everyone jointly moving forward.

It's like how do you connect the women that are in the program with the mission of the program that you are moving toward. That's social enterprise. It's not to me just some persons who, 'Oh, I am gonna be benevolent and go and work and help these people.' I mean that's not social enterprise. That's charity. Social enterprise to me is that you are in it together and you are moving things forward and it's messy and people are part of this process that you force them to be in sometimes when they don't even necessarily want to be in.

The way each staff negotiated the tensions around the two sides was enabled and constrained by their designated roles (e.g., production manager, program manager, office manager, etc.) as well as the historical dominance of production. Speaking from her position as operations director, Sarah provided below a snapshot of how the staff had tried to balance production and programs as the programs gained legitimacy.

The program people initially, I would say, schedule their program around production, and then it sort of evolved that Tuesday is program day. Now we schedule production around Tuesdays, because you are not going to get anything on Tuesdays. Don't schedule a big day on Tuesdays, because it's just program days. The programs are extreme. I mean they [production women] can be in class, they are in class for two hours, and then they take their half an hour lunch, and they are off the production floor for the 2.5 hours, I mean that's like you take four people out of one side. There is nothing that's gonna happen that day. That's just kind of a paddle day.



Evident in Sarah's description was her privileging of production over programs. To Sarah, a self-proclaimed "production junkie," SEHW was essentially a business that happened to provide programs for its employees. She explained, "Our business should be conducted like any other... I don't know what we are doing here is so much different, other than it's more flexible and more lenient, of course, because of the programs and then the daycare." While Sarah recognized that SEHW had two sides, she normalized SEHW as a business where business affairs naturally were prioritized and privileged such as meeting production deadlines.

On the other hand, Lucia, program manager and a self-identified first-generation Mexican immigrant, never hesitated to pull women out of their production routines to take care of urgent program-related affairs such as health insurance appointments. From her position, program needs ought to be prioritized because they affected the well-beings of the women and their families. She explained:

We have to balance the programs with the production and so my work is as important as their work. And the programs have to happen and the production has to happen as well, so we have to balance it and there are times where I have to pull them out and I have to go and tell them. Like today I told Sarah, 'You know these two people have to go to an appointment. They're scheduled for health insurance.' And I said, 'It cannot wait! So they're going to have to leave tomorrow two different times but one after another, and there's another person who's gonna go for the Good Families and Schools program.' And she goes, 'Ahh, you're pulling them out.' And I go, 'Yes.'

Overall, the interviewed staff constructed SEHW as having two sides but often privileged production business over social programs. Informed by the beginning of programs in SEHW that were reactive in nature, this was not surprising. In practice, the construction of SEHW's work and identity as a social enterprise with two sides has consequences and implications for how the staff performed roles. For example, the staff

members were positioned to ensure that both sides of SEHW were on track such as: (a) having to coordinate and balance production with programs, (b) needing to secure production contracts as well as grants, and (c) having to manage not just production but also participation in social programs. Sandra explained how she often felt compelled to push production employees to participate in after-work programs.

We tell people if you don't want us to bug you about, like, your English classes, don't work here. I mean maybe some people don't want to be bothered. They want to work and they wanna go home and not think about it. That's great, but that's not here.

The pressure Sandra felt to ensure adequate participation in programs and the frequent use of the word “work” suggested that SEHW was primarily a workplace that added mission-driven programs in response to the needs of the employees.

*Employer of Immigrant Women from Mexico with Young Children:* The staff overwhelmingly constructed SEHW as a place that employed and worked with immigrant women with young children. Despite the public discourse of SEHW as a NPO for “low income women,” SEHW in reality employed predominantly first-generation immigrant women from Mexico, especially those with young children. Sarah’s questioning of why SEHW was “very immigrant-based” underscored that majority status of immigrant employees in SEHW. She said, “You know sometimes I wonder, and it has evolved that we are very immigrant-based. And I don’t know why it has to be. There are low-income women that are not immigrants.” The practice of employing predominantly immigrant women was often construed as unintentional or accidental. Sandra explained:

I had no intention nor did I have a clue about anything to do with working with immigrant women. What about documentation? I walked in like blind, right? But the credibility of the church helped backing this... The primary base and where we worked was the church, so then all of a sudden literally we were an immigrant, an immigrant women’s group.

In particular, the majority of immigrant women employed by SEHW had young children when they first started working there. One of the stories that Sr. Brooks as a founding member kept repeating was, during the early years of SEHW, many women became pregnant around the same time, and Sandra learned from her own pregnancy the importance of integrating family and work. In the early years of SEHW, as many as 26 children were enrolled in the onsite daycare center. Fonda even depicted SEHW as “the perfect place” for (immigrant) women with kids. She stated, “If you have kids, here it is the perfect place. Like me—Oh, my God! You have your kids here, you can breastfeed the kids, and everything. For me I cannot pay someone for that.”

In practice, employing immigrant women with young children impacted SEHW and the staff’s work in several ways. First, it dictated the kinds of programs that were needed. With the exception of Lucia, most staff didn’t have young children enrolled in daycare anymore, yet they saw the onsite daycare as meaningful and important. Second, it influenced the staff’s decisions of employee hires. For example, Sarah stated frankly the necessity of hiring Spanish-speaking individuals: “Like if we brought in an Anglo woman that didn't speak Spanish, I mean let's face it she probably wouldn't be happy here.” One staff mentioned to me about giving preference to applicants with young children so that the daycare facility could be better utilized. Third, working with this group influenced how the staff approached management. For instance, there were two separate lunch times in SEHW (e.g., 10:30am and 11:30am); Sarah proclaimed that the earlier lunch time was “skewed to” accommodate majority Mexican employees. She stated, “What we do here is we have lunch at 10 o’clock or 10:30, because apparently that’s when people eat lunch in Mexico.” An alternative view was that this arrangement

was partly due to the size of the break room and the availability of two microwave machines. One thing that Sarah's comment highlighted was the Mexican-ness of SEHW that were not named or openly acknowledged by other staff.

*An Organization Founded and Led by Sandra:* All the interviewed staff, including Sandra, commented on the salience of Sandra's role in SEHW and constructed SEHW as a NPO that was founded and led by Sandra, a White woman. Both Fonda and Sarah remarked on Sandra's dedication and commitment to SEHW as Sarah stated, "Sandra's dedication to everything is quite a thing to witness." Fonda explained, "And I have to mention we have a perfect director. Yeah. This is the number one, yeah. With Sandra, everything is possible...She is incredible. I respect her 100%. For me she is my spiritual life. She has an incredible heart." Indeed, Sandra held a very important place in SEHW not only as executive director but often she was regarded as the founder. In all three focus groups that I conducted for the impact analysis, many participants talked about Sandra as the leader but were not necessarily able to identify the roles of the others on the management team such as Alicia and Sarah. The salience and importance of Sandra to members of SEHW was unquestionable.

Sandra founded SEHW not just as a woman with dedication but, more importantly, as a White woman of upper/middle socioeconomic status. What that meant for SEHW was that Sandra had certain connections and access to resources that others might not have. As Sr. Brooks commented, Sandra had "the ability of making friends with people who are movers and shakers in the city" and transformed those connections into resources for SEHW. Alicia in particular remarked on Sandra's identity as a White

person in contrast to potential Latina leadership when she responded to my question about if there were things that she wished were different:

What would things look like with Latina leadership? How much more powerful could our role be in the immigrant community? You can compare yourself to other organizations and maybe we will be a lot stronger on the mission and less effective on the business? Maybe we wouldn't have as many community allies from the funding world, the business community, or communities that are traditionally represented by non-immigrant people. I do think that there is a part of me that kind of wishes there was more connection there, that we really could build that identity in a public way. You know we still debate whether or not we are an immigrant-based organization... And I wonder how our relationships would be different too if Sandra were a Latina?! Like would there be as much trust because often times there is a lot of infighting you know. It's a very interesting dynamic. A lot of them have to do with Latina women looking up to Anglo women as like that kind of *savior mentality*.

Embedded in Alicia's comment was Sandra's resourceful connections with funders and business communities as well as the racialized hierarchy of Latina immigrant women looking up to Sandra to solve their problems that was happening in SEHW. The racial dynamic raises the question of whether or not SEHW would have been as productive with a non-White founder/leader/executive director.

### ***Board of Directors/Volunteers***

The interviewed board of directors/volunteers constructed SEHW as a progressive nonprofit business that featured strong staff under Sandra's leadership and employed "profile employees" of Mexican immigrants. I should note that two of the board members had been with SEHW for more than a decade: Sr. Brooks and Kaya. Sr. Brooks was treated in SEHW, as she phrased it, as one of "the founding mothers." Kaya started out working in SEHW to help "put up the printing unit" and was later invited to join the board. Among the six interviewees in this status group, two of them were interviewed as volunteers: Janet and Kate. As I mentioned earlier, Janet partnered with SEHW as a

researcher and wrote two teaching cases about SEHW based on interviews with key long-term members such as Sandra, Sr. Brooks, Rhena,<sup>29</sup> and Fonda. Kate interacted with SEHW on the basis of a course project where she worked with selected production managers and employees. Overall, members of this status group supported the work of SEHW with their own areas of expertise (e.g., financial forecasting, fund-raising, research, etc.) and were not involved in SEHW's daily operations. The discursive themes that emerged from this status group were: (a) progressive nonprofit business, (b) an organization with strong staff under Sandra's leadership, and (c) employer of profile employees, newly arrived Mexican immigrants.

*Progressive Nonprofit Business:* To participating board members/volunteers, the work of SEHW was primarily an abstract "concept" that embodied progressive thinking about the nonprofit world or the workplace, rather than actual lived experiences. This status group's construction of SEHW was grounded in their support for the women in SEHW through their endorsing of the concept of SEHW. Sr. Brooks explained this idea of supporting the work of and the women in SEHW through its very concept.

I have known them [SEHW] for a long time. The ones who are here now, I would say that 70% of them are new to me. I am more concerned with SEHW than I am with them. I don't know them personally. But if SEHW is healthy, they are going to be healthy. I am concerned about SEHW being there for them. I am not involved with the women. I am involved with the concept... I can't say that I know the women personally, but I know what I want for them. To get it for them,

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<sup>29</sup> Though Rhena was mentioned by a few participants, I did not interview her for several reasons. Rhena is the office manager for SEHW. Like Fonda, she was one of the few long-term Mexican immigrant employees that were later promoted to staff positions. Again and again, Rhena and Fonda played similar roles in SEHW and were mentioned together. Also, I interacted with them similarly, except that Rhena recruited focus group participants for the impact analysis project. For instance, Sandra introduced me to both Rhena and Fonda at the same time. Rhena and Fonda both participated in one of the focus groups. Since Rhena and Fonda's experiences with SEHW were so similar, I decided based on English language fluency to interview Fonda. This choice allowed me to interview staff in diverse roles and feature diverse staff experiences.

SEHW has to be healthy. I really love what they do. I am really committed to what they do.

Carla, president of the board, depicted SEHW also conceptually as “a very exciting model” and a “very high-performing model” of incorporating business as a NPO to achieve self-sufficiency.

To the board members and volunteers, SEHW was a predominantly “progressive” nonprofit business, but a business nonetheless. All interviewees in this status group remarked on some unique or innovative aspects of SEHW that embodied progressive thinking even though only two of the interviewee (i.e., Carla and Janet) actually used the word “progressive.” For Carla who also worked in the nonprofit sector, SEHW was progressive in realizing that “nonprofits need to learn and survive as businesses.” For Janet, a professor of business ethics, SEHW “was a progressive organization trying to do good.” For Margaret, an ESL instructor, SEHW was progressive because its practices of trying to balance economic reality with personal enrichment were “unheard of in most workplaces.” For Kaya working with women’s economic development issues, SEHW was progressive because it was able to create “a culture of respect and dignity” in the workplace that demonstrated “an expectation of respect for people’s dignity.” Sr. Brooks echoed the perceived goal of wanting to “give the women dignity” by creating “jobs that made them feel like they could offer their children something more of an example” as opposed to cleaning toilets and working in hotels.

The progressiveness of SEHW highlighted by members of this status group suggests several trends. First, it is uncommon for NPO’s to integrate business skills and business ventures in their mission-driven programs. Worth (2009) summarizes three perspectives on the pursuit of nonprofit enterprise: (a) some believe NPOs should only

pursue mission-aligned ventures; (b) others believe NPOs should pursue all business ventures that are financially profitable; and (c) economist Dennis Young advocates that NPOs should explore profitable ventures that are either mission-enhancing or mission-neutral. Nonprofit enterprise seems to be a much debated integration. I concur with Sagawa and Segal (2000) that “common interest, common good” efforts are needed to address barriers keeping the business sector and the nonprofit sector from exploring creative partnerships and alliances. Second, it is uncommon for business-oriented organizations to foster a culture of respect and dignity that values their employees as unique individuals, not just workers. Third, it is unlikely for the target women employees in SEHW to find other jobs that give them a sense of dignity.

At its core, the progressiveness of SEHW seemed to lie in the act of actually doing and realizing its mission. As Carla described below, running a business itself seemed capitalistic and not new, but SEHW’s actually trying to run a self-sustained business to support its programs for the marginalized was indeed progressive and liberal.

SEHW has been a social enterprise. And so whoever it serves the mission of the organization is to run a business and to support a program...It’s like this democratic capitalistic idea, ‘You self-sustain and you grow a business.’ That’s, if nothing else, a progressive or liberal idea at all!?

*An Organization with Strong Staff under Sandra’s Leadership:* In talking about SEHEW, most participating board members and volunteers frequently mentioned Sandra’s leadership and strong staff. To them, SEHW was a NPO with strong staff under Sandra’s leadership. Part of the context for this particular construction of SEHW was because most, if not all, board of directors were selected and invited by Sandra to join, and most, if not all, volunteers first went through Sandra and/or Alicia before starting their work with SEHW, as in my case. As a result, most board members and volunteers



only came to know about SEHW's work and identity through representations filtered by Sandra and the staff, except Sr. Brooks and Kaya in their early years when they were involved in the operations of SEHW. A potential cannon may be, as Worth (2009) observes, is that the board consisting of individuals recruited by the founder tend to "acquiesce to his or her authority and charisma" (p. 106).

To most board members and volunteers, what seemed most distinctive or impressive about SEHW were Sandra and the staff. For instance, Janet described SEHW as being sustained by Sandra's efforts and leadership, "Sandra has done a marvelous job trying to keep SEHW going at times when I am sure it was difficult because it had its ups and downs." Kaya remarked on a level of expectation in SEHW carried out by Sandra and the staff that seemed important in her thinking about the work of SEHW, "I think in the SEHW there is always a level of expectation carried out by the managers who are there and by Susan. It's kind of like, 'Okay this is what we expect. We don't tolerate this other stuff. This is what we expected.' So I think people aspire to that." Margaret commented below on Sandra's and Alicia's abilities to perform their roles and navigate relationships in SEHW as the one of the things that stood out to her about SEHW.

I do have to say that I think that Sandra and Alicia are destined in their jobs, their experience and mindful of relationships all the time. To me they are always very aware of that, so I guess right now I can't say anything in particular. I think that that is one of the things I'm just impressed with them. It's one of the things that just stood out to me in this organization.

As president of the board, Carla constructed SEHW as an organization with strong staff led by Sandra where the board only needed to play a supporting role. She said:

Number one the reason why we [the board] don't do a lot of governance and oversight is because there is such a strong history of staff. Sandra has been more

than on top of those aspects of running the nonprofit and the audits as a non-profit receiving grant funds particularly from the government and in their case. Also a lot of private foundations money you know there are some checks in that process just getting support and having us reporting relationships.

Hopkins (2003) describes board members in NPO's as "fiduciaries of the organization's resources and guardians of its mission" (p. 1). At the same time, nonprofit governing boards are not all the same and do not share the same responsibilities (Worth, 2009).

Most interviewed board members and volunteers constructed SEHW with strong staff under Sandra's leadership and saw their role as primarily supporting the work of SEHW with little governance. Bruce Hopkins, JD, LL.M (2003) states that nonprofit boards have legal duties and should "always be accountable to the public trust" (p. vii) in ensuring that "an organization functions within the framework of and in furtherance of its mission, that its resources are adequate and appropriately protected, and that there is sufficient oversight" (p. vi). Given this legal context, the board members' construction of SEHW with strong staff suggested that the board might serve limited functions other than supporting and keeping SEHW in compliance with 501(c)3 tax-exemption regulations. This raises the important question of how and whom should be recruited to ensure that the SEHW board can truly fulfill its legal and moral obligations.

*Employer of Profile Employees, Newly Arrived Mexican Immigrants:*

Collectively, members of this status group constructed a particularized profile for the production employees in SEHW. This particularized profile did not surface in board meetings until Alicia brought up comprehensive immigration reform on September 1, 2009. As Alicia stated, "You know we still debate whether or not we are an immigrant-based organization." The controversy centered on the label 'immigration.' Carla's

comment below illustrates her dealing with this reality of SEHW's employing "profile employees."

I think it's a skillful way of opening up a conversation about SEHW and having SEHW's legitimacy as a business and as a very high-performing nonprofit, not be threatened by other people's views around whatever buzz words or things that would push their buttons. Yeah. So I think if you go there I think it's clear that there is kind of a profile employee and that's no accident and so this is kind of interesting about this immigration center. This is now bringing that up to the surface, something that was not at all on the surface.

The only two people who were conscious of this reality were Kaya and Sr. Brooks. In particular, Sr. Brooks embraced the fact that SEHW was an identity-based NPO for newly arrived immigrants from Mexico. She responded to my question on her feeling about whether or not SEHW should expand its employee base, "I think it's gonna be my bias. They were created for them, for that particular group... Well, it's newly arrived Mexicans. But I don't think it's a conscious thing." Kaya, who self-identified as Japanese Canadian, indirectly acknowledged the Mexican-ness of SEHW through her example of her son attending the onsite childcare and identifying as Mexican. She explained:

I was always open to understanding their culture, having my kids go to the childcare. And so my oldest son when he was 5, he told me that he wasn't Japanese and that he was Mexican. And he spoke a lot of Spanish. I mean you know so my kids like really experienced that whole kind of growing up there.

The hesitation from members of this status group to name SEHW as an immigrant-based NPO underscores the contested nature of working only with profile employees who just arrived in the U.S from Mexico. Though it was not openly discussed, SEHW at the production level was relatively homogeneous in terms of employing females from the lower socioeconomic class, age groups of 35-55 years of age, Spanish-speaking immigrants. However, most board of directors selected by Sandra were much

more similar to herself than to the production employees in terms of group memberships and cultural backgrounds. This raises an important question about what kinds of representations on the board can best guide and oversee SEHW to fulfill and enhance its missions.

### ***Production Employees***

The interviewed production employees constructed SEHW as a workplace with daycare and flexibility that manufactured sewing-based work and that offered women employment plus opportunities for personal development. I should note that one of the women, Greta, was placed as a floor supervisor under Fonda five months after she started working in SEHW. Floor supervisors, however, were not considered staff members in SEHW. None of the floor supervisors were listed on SEHW's website as staff. Also, Greta was recruited by Lucia as a production employee for this project. The discursive themes related to the construction of SEHW among the production employees were: (a) a workplace with daycare and flexibility, (b) a producer of sewing-based work, and (c) a source of employment and opportunities for personal development.

*Workplace with Daycare and Flexibility:* For the majority of production employees, the most important features of SEHW as a workplace were onsite daycare and flexibility to leave work for their children if needed. Those two aspects were predominantly the production women's favorite things about SEHW, except Lani who was retired and no longer had young kids. Emily's response below exemplified the importance of daycare and flexibility for the production employees:

The flexibility that we have to go and leave the children at school and to go and pick them up. And another one is the nursery that is very important also because there are those of us mothers that have small children and we don't have anywhere to leave them, and we have the nursery here.

The meaningfulness of having onsite daycare at work was underscored by Dora's comment as an employee who no longer had young children enrolled in the daycare. The onsite daycare was what attracted Dora to SEHW in the first place more than anything else. Dora explained:

So in the beginning I went to the San Garcia Church, and I went there for a long, long time. When I was there, I heard Sandra. She told everybody about the program... Sister Brooks translated [what she said] into Spanish. And the most important thing for me is that she said she had a babysitter, the daycare, because I had my boy... For me, it's very good because it is very difficult to hire a babysitter. When she said she had daycare, she said she would pay for sewing... The daycare for me at the time was more important than sewing.

Besides affordability at the rate of \$.25 per hour, the onsite daycare alleviated from the production women worries about their children and thus enabled them to concentrate on their work. Felicia even attributed the onsite daycare as the secret to SEHW's work.

All your attention is at your work. I think that is the secret, because you have your mind at what you are doing. I mean you feel confident about your kids and they are okay there. When I was working at other places, like I used to get off at 5 and I had to pick up my kids at 5:30, but I used to work by the mountains. By the time I got to the daycare, it took me more than half an hour and they sent me a report. I said I had to leave 5 minutes before. I used to be very stressed about leaving like, 'I have to go now.' I have to go because you don't know what the traffic is going to be. You don't know, I mean, many things.

Similarly, flexibility in SEHW enabled the production women to attend to their children in public schools. Felicia echoed the importance of having that flexibility. She stated, "I can, the flexibility, because I mean if my kids need me." At its core, the daycare and the flexibility enabled the production women to negotiate and perform their dual roles as workers and mothers.

*Producer of Sewing-based Work:* Four of the five participating production women mentioned sewing as the reason they decided to work in SEHW. They either were

interested in sewing if they had not done it before or had prior experiences with sewing. Their comments constructed the work of SEHW as primarily sewing-based. In reality, SEHW manufactured not just custom sewing products but also labels and design products using glass mosaic and ceramic tiles. Sewing was what started SEHW and seemed to be what was most salient for these production women in thinking about their work. From an organizational standpoint, SEHW “chose sewing as its focus because it was a skill many women possessed” as stated in an organizational document published in 2008.

Lani decided to get involved in SEHW because she enjoyed sewing as she explained: “At church, they said about this co-op [SEHW] being formed. So, I decided to give it a try because I have always enjoyed sewing. So, I have been here since then.” Emily commented on the experience of visiting SEHW and watching her friend sew, “One of my friends said, ‘I am working at a job where we sew.’ She sewed. And I saw how she sewed and she would say, ‘You know how to do it. You can [come and work here].” Greta responded that it was her previous sewing experience that brought her to SEHW. She explained:

I worked previously in a sewing company also. Then that’s why I came and applied here because it was practically the same line of work that I was looking for... That’s why I entered here, or let’s say it was what primarily motivated me to work here was that they told me it was a place where they sewed and all that.

*Source of Employment and Opportunities for Self-development:* All four first-generation Mexican immigrant women (i.e., Felicia, Dora, Emily, and Greta) commented on the SEHW as a place for both employment and personal development. On the other hand, Lani, a self-identified second-generation Mexican American female, commented more on the employment aspect of the SEHW. To the production employees, SEHW overall was a NPO that offered women employment and opportunities for self-

development that they would not otherwise have. Felicia's comment below summed up this particular construction of SEHW:

The goals for SEHW, they like to have work for everybody and they like everybody to participate in everything and they like maybe success for women. They like a woman to have her economic development and belief in herself, you know, like learning English and developing skills. So, if we have to work at other places, we won't have trouble.

Similarly, Greta constructed SEHW as a place that offered both work and self-development opportunities for women, but she, as a junior member who was with SEHW for five years, seemed to view the two sides as more separate than integrated. She said:

I believe the production is what sustains SEHW...I understand the goal of SEHW to be, more than anything else, that its employees have great development as individuals. Because I believe that it is a manner of helping the persons who want to improve.

### ***Organizational Documents***

The organizational documents consistently constructed SEHW a "social business" for low-income women (and their families). They depicted the foundations of SEHW as grounded in two key concepts: (a) "women-driven production" and "leading with the economics." The rationale behind focusing on low-income women was based on the belief that "if women are given the opportunity to earn an income, then they will choose to invest their earnings into improving the lives of their children and their families first." The focus on economics came from the perceived need that "a low income family's primary concern is to obtain a reliable, consistent living wage job."

While commitment to low-income women remained at the core of SEHW throughout the 15 years, strategies adopted by SEHW to meet its mission evolved. Initially, SEHW was "an exciting opportunity" for low-income women to earn much needed income by tailoring "their talents and skills to a national market through emphasis

on designs that originate from the folk art of the Southwest.” The initial strategy was to focus on creating good jobs where low-income women could develop into “better producers” and build on their existing skills in sewing and handwork. Later on, SEHW evolved to be “a visionary social business” that sought to address the circular cycle of poverty and create intergenerational wealth through its “*stable and able* management approach” (emphasis in original) that combined employment stability with increasing the ability of women to participate in their family and community. SEHW later expanded its strategy by incorporating “personal capacity building” (a.k.a., “human investment”) into its existing model of creating good/dignified work opportunities.

### ***SEHW from Three Status Positions and Organizational Documents***

The discursive themes that emerged from the three status groups illustrated that their constructions of SEHW were closely tied to their roles and positions. The staff members constructed SEHW as a manufacturing business led by Sandra with social programs for immigrant women employees with young children. The board of directors/volunteers constructed SEHW as a progressive nonprofit business that featured strong staff under Sandra’ leadership and employed profile employees, Mexican immigrants. The production employees constructed SEHW as a workplace with daycare and flexibility, an organization that manufactured sewing-based work, and a source of employment and opportunities for personal development of women.

When juxtaposing four constructions of SEHW, several interpretations may be advanced. First, the business side of SEHW was clearly privileged and dominant, whereas mission-driven programs were secondary. Across the four sources, SEHW emerged as a social business that emphasized sewing-based work opportunities for low-



income women. This raises the question of the extent to which this strategy/model allows SEHW to meet its mission. Second, members across the three status groups had contradictory views of working only with Mexican immigrants. The contradictions seemed enabled and constrained by the discrepancy between the public discourse of SEHW being designed for low-income women and the practice of SEHW employing primarily Mexican immigrant women. Could SEHW publicly claim its Mexican-ness in the current anti-immigration climate and how might this move affect the work of SEHW? Third, Sandra's role and leadership was emphasized by both staff and board members/volunteers, but not production employees. Compared with the other two status groups, the production employees tended not to mention demographic markers and/or status differences. This may indicate that status differences are not an issue for production women or that they are take-for-granted or that norms of respect require keeping silent about status differences, for instance.

### **Contextually Contingent Intersecting Cultural Identity Positions**

The second research question asks what interview responses from individuals working within Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW) and organizational documents reveal about intersecting cultural identity positions. Most participating staff, board of directors, and volunteers spoke about their multiple identities in some capacity and reflected on how their identities might influence their work. For instance, conversations and descriptions about the new program director to fill Alicia's position indicated a preference for a woman who was not just Latina/Hispanic but also had experiences working with low-income communities. Class, race, and gender were the most frequently named identities. Most production women, however, did not comment on

their cultural identities, perhaps partly because I am an outsider who does not speak Spanish. The only time they did comment was when I brought up the ascription of “low-income women” that was frequently used to describe them. The following are themes that emerged: (a) contested avowals and ascriptions for production employees, (b) avowals that reinforced hierarchy, (c) ascriptions that minimized levels of agency, and (d) questions about how to empower women across lines of difference.

### *Contested Avowals and Ascriptions for Production Employees*

Grounded in the divergent constructions of SEHW’s work and identity as a NPO, contestations emerged between how most staff and board members described production employees and how the production women viewed themselves. In organizational documents, SEHW remained a NPO for low-income women but acknowledged employing “a very different population to fill its mission.”<sup>30</sup> In reality, the vast majority of production women employed by SEHW were newly arrived Mexican immigrants with low incomes. Situated in this discrepancy, the two most contested labels were low income and Mexican immigrants. Also, these two identities were consistently constructed as lower status social positions.

*Low Income:* Most staff and board members described a low-income status for the production employees, whereas the production employees did not identify with the ascription. Since its inception, Sandra applied for grants writing about “low-income women.” So, the term low income was instrumental for SEHW to obtain grants and campaign for donations. As none of the participating staff and board members was of

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<sup>30</sup> In an organizational document titled “SEHW Final Paper” published in 2009, it stated that average employees of SEHW had a 6<sup>th</sup> grade education, came from low-income communities, spoke Spanish with limited English skills, and had young children. Also, even though most of them were married, they often had “destabilizing home situations.”

low-income status, their ascriptions of low income for the production employees were rooted in their desire to help and their assumptions of what low income might mean in terms of resources. On the other hand, the production women found the term low income problematic because it suggested “nothingness” when they translated it into Spanish.

Enabled by the discourse of SEHW as a NPO for low-income women, staff and board members discussed the production employee’s low-income status through references to a lack of different types of resources. Sr. Brooks described the production women as “poor” and thought that she needed to get them free baby wipes from a local charity. She explained:

They [the production women] were poor. I thought if they didn’t get these baby wipes, because they all had babies, and I thought ‘Gosh, you know, get this.’ And also I can give a lot of them [baby wipes] to the daycare.

Lani, one of the few non-immigrant production employees, described her colleagues as “single moms” with one source of income from SEHW. Lani frequently offered her job whenever there was not enough work for everyone. She said:

What I do is I usually tell Sarah, ‘If there is somebody that can do my job, let them have it.’ Because I see that a lot of them are single moms, and a lot of them have to have an income. And I got a husband.

Kaya described having to negotiate working with low-income communities as she perceived them to have limited skill sets and lack the ability to “see the big picture” due to limited education. She explained:

I have a whole other set of skills that I don’t think other people there had. So how do you work on a regular basis, as equals, to people who don’t have as much education, who don’t have as much understanding, who can’t see the big picture necessarily? That has been something that I have to negotiate there. And I think working in any kind of nonprofit where you’re working with people from low-income communities you have to really negotiate that well.

Janet, however, described the production women as “very highly skilled” because she could never do that work, and she depicted the production women, in relation to Sandra’s upper/middle class, as “people who don’t have many resources, who don’t have many advantages, like an excellent education for example.”

The production women struggled with being described as low income. When asked if she felt the low-income label described who she was, Emily responded: “I don’t believe so because we are all fighting women... Well, we are low-income because we are women, mothers that work and we are looking out for our children. True?” Felicia described the different understandings of the term “low income” between the staff and the production employees:

Sometimes when you say low income, you have nothing to live on. But we [production employees] know that they [staff] wanted to mean to say that if you are in this level, you can make it to the next higher level and be better. Because if you go through the people who work here, it’s not like a low, low-income level. So, it is not that, I mean. It depends on the mentality of the people... Sometimes you translate from English to Spanish and the meaning is different, and the word you use is not like strong enough or stronger than you need it. We have to think about it.

To most Spanish-speaking production employees, the term “low income” suggested nothingness and their need to improve and elevate their status. However, most did not see themselves in those terms and did not consider their income level as lacking.

*Mexican Immigrants:* Another identity that was highly contested in the work of SEHW was the concentration of newly arrived immigrants from Mexico. As Alicia commented, SEHW as a whole still debated whether or not it was an immigrant-based organization. Although SEHW was Mexican immigrant-based at the level of production workers, SEHW was “non-Spanish” and “non-Latina” at the level of board of directors as Alicia phrased it. This discrepancy highlights the participants’ divergent social positions.

Alicia, a self-identified Colombiana-Americana, felt legitimate as a representative of SEHW staff to the board; she viewed her similarities to and ability to represent SEHW and the production women as important. She explained:

Using the board as an example where we have a lot of non-Spanish speakers and non-Latinos I feel a lot more legitimate as a representative of SEHW because I am Latina, because I do speak Spanish in terms of my ability to represent the production workers and SEHW on that level. And as a representative of SEHW to the broader community, even though I am not Mexican and I was born in the United States just because my name and my language ability and the way I look, I feel a lot more legitimate as going out and talking about the mission of the SEHW, working with a lot of Mexicana women.

Embedded in Alicia's comment is presumed interconnectivity between immigrant status and Mexican-ness, in contrast to the position of those on the board, further reflecting tensions and contestations around Mexican immigrants in SEHW.

The contestations of the Mexican immigrant identity predominantly were triggered by negative ascriptions. Many Mexican immigrants in SEHW both at the staff level (i.e., Fonda, Rhena, and Lucia) and at the level of production employees, remarked on negative descriptions and assumptions about first-generation Mexicans in the United States. For instance, Lucia talked about her avowal as Mexican in response to anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican discourse. She stated:

There're times when, especially when you're an immigrant and the other person is not, and they go, 'Oh those Mexicans' and they don't even realize, they don't see me as that. Sometimes when I am talking to like a New Mexican, for instance, they go, 'Oh. They shouldn't come anymore. Those Mexicans shouldn't come anymore.' And I'm like, "I'm one of them. I'm Mexican." And they say, 'Oh but not you, everyone else but you.' So I just go, 'What do you mean?'

Lucia's comment also highlighted the frequent usage of saying the word "immigrant" but really meaning "the immigrants from Mexico." In SEHW, Mexican immigrant status referred to first-generation Mexican immigrants as highlighted by the distinction that

Lani made between herself as a Hispanic/second-generation immigrant from Mexico and the other production women. She avowed, “I was born and raised in this state... See we were taught Castilian Spanish in school. That’s what we were taught. And it’s different to theirs, to the Mexicans.”

Abalos (2007) argues, as a self-identified Mexican/Chicano/Latino, that the identity of Mexican and Latino communities is rooted in ambivalence and a sense of diaspora. Also, there is prejudice in favor of “being Hispanic with lighter skin, blonde, and blue eyes” that has been practiced in Latin America since the beginning of the Spanish Conquest (e.g., Abalos, 2007; Muhammad, 1995). In Lani’s case, she preferred to be identified as Hispanic and recalled her encounters with racism against Mexicans that prompted her to identify as Hispanic. She explained:

My mom and my dad came from Mexico way back... Now they use Mexican a lot, but when I was growing up it wasn’t. It was White, Hispanic, Black, or other. That’s what it was. So, we always do Hispanic because we weren’t White and we weren’t Black. I guess with ‘other’ we could have been Mexican, but we never... I remember where we lived our house was here and our neighbors were over here, we were born and raised here. I don’t know where her [a neighbor’s] parents came from, but she was always telling us something about our, because we were Mexicans. I mean she was always, she was a racist. Maybe that’s why we ended up being Hispanic.

Negative ascriptions and stereotypes about Mexicans and Mexican immigrants didn’t just come from community members but also came from some staff and board members in SEHW. For instance, Fonda discussed below her goal of correcting over-generalized misconceptions about Mexicans such as with Sarah, the operations director.

I’m trying to change like for example Sarah. She’s like a good person. She has it in her mind all the Mexican people are the same. For example, the Mexican women have many kids, they have [food] stamps, they are all this, you know. So she has in her mind, ‘Oh, Fonda is a Mexican and she probably never went to the college.’ For example like that. So I’m trying to change their minds. I’m not the same. It’s like at work. Not everybody is the same. Like drunk people, why do

people say: ‘Oh, it’s a Mexican’? That’s not true. Or somebody sell the marijuana, ‘Oh, it’s the Mexican.’ It’s not true. But it’s the stereotype. So I am trying to change this, not only with Sarah, because she’s a good person, but I’m trying to change this. It’s not true. I came here for work to have a better life for my family.

In the context of SEHW working to empower its production employees who were Mexican immigrant women, Mexican men often became the scapegoat for many of the problems they faced. Making Mexican men the scapegoat then obscured the large social systems such as patriarchy and white supremacy that conditioned the Mexican women’s levels of agency. Sr. Brooks’ comment below highlighted one stereotypic example about Mexican men. She said:

Mexican men are very controlling. They are macho, macho men. You know, they are very macho. And they control the money, and they control many things. And that’s an understatement. Some Mexican men are very macho. And, so, for them [production women] to be able to have their own money and spend their own money, it’s very, very empowering.

As the executive director, Sandra’s opinion on immigration issues greatly shaped the discourse in SEHW. Sandra, though not overtly, did not support making the label (Mexican) immigrant a part of SEHW’s public identity for she believed SEHW was a model for empowering low-income women who happened to be immigrants from Mexico.

I think it’s true when I am here with Fonda and Rhena talking about their issues, Greta and what she just went through. I mean it’s amazing what difficulties people are presented with either their own lives or with their families around this issue. So for us to kind of, sort of say, ‘Oh, you know that’s not something we want to take or deal with.’ It’s wrong. And also I think our real model is for how things can be done for a low-income population which happens to be immigrants.

As a founder and the executive director, Sandra had been there with the production women through a lot of unfortunate experiences. While she found it problematic at some level for SEHW not to tackle those immigration-related issues, Sandra did not believe

SEHW was a model for working with Mexican immigrants exclusively. Nonetheless, many of the production women still perceived Sandra as a supporter of immigration issues as exemplified by Dora's comment below:

I think they [the staff] are very interested in everything about immigrants because they participate in everything. For example, Fonda and Rhena participate in many things regarding immigrants. Sandra, maybe she doesn't participate a lot, because she lives in the capital of the state, but she supports everything, every time.

Sandra's absence, though naturally excused because of her living an hour away from SEHW, as well as her comments above, seem to speak volumes about her positions on immigration issues.

### ***Avowals Reinforcing Hierarchy***

When speaking about and making sense of their own identities, the participating staff, board members, and volunteers were similar in their avowals that privileged their organizational roles in a way that ignored intersectionality of identities. Also, the staff, board members, and volunteers tended to recognize differences in group identities but privileged points of connection. In contrast, the production employees interviewed shared a tendency to emphasize similarities and denied difference. Overall, the contrasting avowals functioned to elevate higher status for staff, board members, and volunteers, and reinforced hierarchy in SEHW.

*Avowals from Higher-Status Speakers that Emphasized Roles and Ignored Intersectionality of Identities:* Unless being asked, most staff and board members privileged the roles they played as the most salient or important identity in SEHW in a predominantly acontextual manner. Sandra responded to my question about the layoff process and said, "I am the E.D. [executive director]. I mean I have to be the bottom



line.” When asked if and how her religious identity came into play in SEHW, Sr. Brooks responded, “They respected me as a [religious] Sister, but I have never lorded over them, and I am respected as one of them. I think they do accept me more as a founding mother than as a religious being.” Margaret emphasized the salience of her role as the instructor as she explained: “The employees I worked with in my class, I think they just viewed me as a teacher who was dedicated to their learning, and so I liked that viewpoint and so that’s what I would want.” Carla stressed her role as “one of the first people that were invited to join the board beyond the founders.”

Most staff, board members, and volunteers except Alicia and Lucia emphasized their roles and did not volunteer their other identities unless asked. Kaya, who avowed being a Princeton graduate and a Japanese woman, emphasized the unique set of skills that she brought into SEHW as the primary reason why she was accepted by the mostly homogenous group in SEHW that placed her mostly as an outsider. She explained:

You know when I started out all I can say is from my point of view. When I started there, I just felt like they needed a lot of my skills, so I was willing to work and I just kind of did my work. And then I was there for so long, they accepted me after a while, but it’s a very close family in a lot of ways, I feel, like sharing food.

In general, most staff and board members in SEHW were aware of their levels of privilege based on their race and class, but they somehow ignored the intersectionality of their identities when speaking about their organizational roles in SEHW. For instance, Carla acknowledged the privilege she enjoyed as a second-generation immigrant of European descent when speaking about the immigrant center to be led by Alicia. However, while Carla acknowledged her levels of privilege as a White person, she

ignored how her intersecting race and class might have influenced the way she enacted her role as the president of the board. She said:

I am aware of the privilege I have and being second generation European descendent. Definitely you know I am no more than second generation, so it seems like nothing, but the privilege that goes with that in this environment is a huge force. So I am definitely aware of that, and I feel kind of ignorant about the political side of this, and even just the legal and mechanics of it. So it's like this experience that people in our own community are having and I don't feel in touch with it.

Sandra talked her identity as the founder without naming her racial and class positions.

When asked about her perceived identities in SEHW, Sandra acknowledged her identities as a rich White woman living in the capital of the state. Sandra, however, did not associate her status in SEHW in any ways with her intersecting racial and class identities.

She explained:

I like working with people and I like working with these people. Do I get challenged enough here on stuff that I might not do right? Probably not! There is that power dynamic... What I need to do is figure out how I can get more external and then there is more new blood internal... But if I am the one who is doing that [helping people to become part of the process], which I am not, then you are not successful, right? That just has to be the part of the culture of SEHW, not just me. I think that that's the founder syndrome that people talk about.

The founder syndrome refers to when the vision and charisma of the founder no longer suffice and pose challenges to the organization's growth (Worth, 2009). Sandra was aware of her higher status in SEHW. The higher status position Sandra held in SEHW was evoked by layered intersections of race, class, gender, educational level, and organizational history.

Most staff, board members, and volunteers seemed either unaware or hesitant to name and explore their intersecting identities, even though unpacking how those intersections function in SEHW has practical implications for how SEHW carries out its

work and fulfills its mission. I argue, when working for and with an identity-based NPO like SEHW, it should be critical for the staff and board members to consider their roles in relation to the production women as enabled and constrained by their various group memberships such as race and class.

*Avowals from Higher-Status Speakers that Recognized Difference but Privileged Points of Connections:* When asked, most staff, board members, and volunteers did not hesitate to describe their different identities in relation to the production women. They most frequently spoke about their racial identities and socioeconomic status in contrast to those of the production women's. Although they recognized and identified different cultural identities, they denied the potential impact of those different identities on the work of SEHW and privileged relational connections. For instance, Sandra acknowledged her identities as a rich White woman in relation to the production employees but emphasized acceptance and "complete *cariño* (love or affection)" she felt in SEHW.

Sandra: How do I see the women as seeing me? You know, I really, I don't know.

Yea-Wen: Do you think they see you as a White woman?

Sandra: Sure, oh yeah, I am sure. I live in the capital of the state.

Yea-Wen: So a White woman from the capital of the state?

Sandra: Well, I mean I am. I think I am sure they think I am rich and compared to them I am. But here is what I do feel— I feel accepted. When I was younger, and this is an interesting point, because when I was younger, I worked with this whole African American group and I was the only White person. It really mattered to me that people didn't think of me as 'She is not so White.' There was this thing. But now that I've gotten older, I am like 'This is me.' I mean sorry I am... So I feel that we know we are from different worlds and I know I don't get their world as perfectly and they know they don't get my world as perfectly, but I think what we do have is complete *cariño*. I mean we take care of each other and we accept each other at sort of where we are.

Margaret, a former ESL instructor/board member, responded to my question about group identities that she did not reveal in SEHW when interacting with the production employees. She described holding back certain information that was tied to her higher socioeconomic status such as going on vacation. She said:

I maybe was more private about some things, just maybe activities I was doing. Or if I were going on vacation for example, I probably wouldn't talk about it a lot. Maybe I would mention it to Alicia, but I would probably hold back. I know I did. I held back talking about them a lot with the employees because I felt that, first of all, it's not relevant or even though we would be talking about what's going on in our lives. If it was something that I didn't think that they would be participating in, or had the opportunity to participate in themselves, I was probably a lot more reluctant to just volunteer that information...It wasn't really relevant to our classroom experience necessarily, but it's also I guess I just didn't want to extenuate the differences in our lives as much as the things that we had in common I suppose.

The class difference between the production women and the staff/board members was underscored by Margaret's communicative choice to reveal what she held back to Alicia. On the other hand, Margaret felt comfortable talking about going on vacations with Alicia, a staff member, based on their similar socioeconomic status.

Kaya avowed being a Princeton graduate and highlighted the difference in educational levels between her and the production women. While she recognized and acknowledged differences across status groups, Kaya concluded those differences did not matter for the daily operations of SEHW.

I think they [production women] are aware that I went to school, that I got a university degree, and that I am pretty smart. But I don't think they know what that means. They don't know what going to MIT means. Sandra is a graduate of MIT. I don't think they know that, what that means. I think it helps in the funding world outside when they see the resume and we all come from good universities. I think that helps, but for day to day operation for SEHW I don't think it matters.

Unlike the production women, most staff and board members did not hesitate to name and identify differences in SEHW. Although staff and board members described

differences, they tended to deny their importance or impact on the work of SEHW and privileged relational connections.

*Avowals from Production Women that Privileged Similarity and Denied*

*Difference:* Most production women interviewed emphasized similarity of identities among members of SEHW. For instance, Greta stressed the majority similarity among members of SEHW as Latinas and Hispanics. She explained:

The employees have always been treated, even if they are from another country, in the same manner as if they were from our country [Mexico]...I don't believe there is any difference [in SEHW] because almost the majority, we almost have very similar cultures...We're all Spanish speakers and that includes people from Cuba. That includes us from Mexico. That includes Alicia who is from Colombia. That includes the ones who were born here, but with the roots like Mexican or Latina roots. So that includes everybody and that's why we're all so similar...

Even when I posed the question of her own identities in relation to Alicia, a self-identified Colombiana Americana, Greta emphasized similar identities that she and Alicia shared. She stated:

I see her [Alicia] as a mother that is very similar to me. As a daughter, she is very similar to me. As a worker. It is just that she is at a professional level, but I think that we have the same manner of development as much one thing as another.

When differences in identities did come up or became apparent, the participating production women emphasized that "It doesn't matter." For instance, Dora, when responding to my question about if most employees were from Mexico, listed individuals with non-Mexican identities and concluded that it was normal for difference to exist and thus difference didn't matter. She explained:

Andrea is from Colombia. But earlier we have had another person from Cuba and someone from Panama and one lady from India. We have people from different countries... In the work for each person, it is different. It doesn't matter if you are from the same places. Many people are different. So, sometimes I think in the work I accept each person and everything, so he has his goals and everything is fine in the work. I think that is okay.

Felicia concluded, when responding to my question about the label low income, that “Well, you know what? I didn’t think about it [the label low income]. It doesn’t mean a lot to me.” Emily stated in response to my question about relationships across status positions, that “No, there is not a difference. Except that Sarah speaks English. But we do get along outside and inside of work. Ah, with Fonda, well, super well.”

The strategy of emphasizing similarity and denying difference grew out of an environment where low-income Mexican immigrant women were the numerical majority in SEHW. By stressing similarities and denying differences, the production women could have more of a united front and render unimportant status hierarchies between themselves and the staff and board members. At the same time, the presence of a few non-Mexican and/or non-Spanish individuals confirmed the insignificance of difference. The privileging of similarities in the face of obvious racial, class-based and educational differences suggested a need to position themselves as somewhat aligned.

### ***Problematic Ascriptions***

When offering ascriptions about others’ cultural identities, the participants described a wide range of group identities such as: organizational roles, racial identities, linguistic identities as in Spanish- or English-speaking, socioeconomic status, etc. In terms of individuals being described, Sandra and Alicia were the most frequently mentioned. Overall, the participants’ ascriptions differed across status levels. In response to my questions, most staff, board members, and volunteers described more group identities than the production employees. Two types of ascriptions emerged as problematic: first, ascriptions that were not consistent with individuals’ avowals, and,

second, ascriptions that implicated status hierarchy that functioned to lower individuals' levels of agency.

*Ascriptions that Contradicted Avowals:* Besides participating production women's contestations about being ascribed as low income that I discussed earlier, ascriptions that contradicted avowals occurred frequently when comparing board members' roles described by board members and by Alicia and Sandra. At the organizational level, organizational documents described roles for the board in ways that contradicted the descriptions of most board members. The SEHW Board of Directors Handbook of Spring 2009 stated that the roles of the board members included: ambassadors, fund-raisers, task force members participating in strategic planning, and leaders providing fiscal and legal oversight. However, most board members, such as Carla, described themselves as "supporting what SEHW does." This raises the question of how the functionality of the board might have impacted the work of SEHW.

Alicia self-identified as a second-generation Colombiana Americana, but she often felt "like a mystic at SEHW" because individuals from different social positions perceived her differently. To White women like Sandra, Shirley, and Sr. Brooks, Alicia felt she was perceived in the same way as the Mexican immigrants. She explained responding to my question about how she felt she was perceived in SEHW, "That's a complicated one for me because I am not Mexicana you know. So I feel like Sandra and Sarah, who are the Anglos, they are seeing me as the same as everybody else." Sr. Brooks described Alicia as strictly "Mexican." She said, "Alicia is, in fact, you know she has a personality, and she is Mexican, you know, so she understands the culture more than Sandra and Rhena." Based on Alicia's interest in immigrant movement, Carla assumed

that Alicia was a “first-generation immigrant,” and said, “I don’t think she was born in the United States, I am not quite sure, but was raised in the US definitely. But her parents are immigrants, Hispanic immigrants.”

To the Hispanic and Mexican women, Alicia was clearly a Colombian. One of the markers that distinguished Alicia as a Colombian was her usage of the two second-person singular pronouns *you* in Spanish—*tú* and *usted*. Lucia explained: “Alicia says, ‘From now on, it’s my goal, I am gonna tell everybody *tú*, so Lidia *tú*.’ By the time she knows it, she goes back to *usted*. Colombians use a lot of *usted*.” Covarrubias’ (2002) study on pronominal address in a Mexican organization argues that the use of *usted* enables employees to create social meanings characterized by asymmetrical status alignments, where as *tú* enables employees to create more symmetrical or horizontal relationships. Also, as a second-generation immigrant, Alicia acknowledged speaking functional, but not official, Spanish. Together her Spanish competence and her status as the program director set her apart from the production women. She explained:

During the lunch break I can go out to eat with the women and feel very much an outsider and there are different things at play. There is respect for me from them as the manager coming in and they are always very polite and inviting me more, but I think I don’t understand humor, so there is a language issue. I don’t speak as clearly and convey myself as clearly in Spanish. My Spanish is functional but it’s not official.

All these inconsistent ascriptions corresponded to Alicia’s feeling “like a mystic at SEHW.” Alicia’s race/ethnicity, language abilities, education levels, and immigration history simultaneously intersected in how she was positioned in SEHW. When situating the inconsistent descriptions of Alicia’s identities in the context of her work in SEHW, they sometimes worked in her favor and sometimes against her. She said, “I feel like a little bit a chameleon in that I can morph to fit into different groups and that can be very



effective sometimes and sometimes it's not." Given that her chameleon-like persona did serve her work, maybe that's why all these inconsistent ascriptions lasted throughout the 11 years that Alicia had been with SEHW.

In the case of Sandra, staff and board members/volunteers described her identities differently than the production employees. To most staff and board members/volunteers, Sandra was "a White woman," "a MIT graduate," and semi-jokingly "a great White hope." Most staff, board members, and volunteers recognized Sandra's racial, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. To the production women, Sandra was most frequently described in terms of her ability to speak Spanish. Emily remarked on Sandra's learning Spanish in order to facilitate communication with the production women and said, "Sandra did not know any Spanish and she learned Spanish in order to be able to communicate with us." Dora considered Sandra a great person because she made efforts to learn Spanish and exhibited concerns for the women's and their families' well-being. She explained:

I think Sandra is a very, very good, great person 'cause she knows now how to speak Spanish. Sometimes I laugh with her, 'What? You speak Spanish now.' She said, 'Shut up!' So, sometimes when someone speaks in English, she translates it into Spanish. That's why I laugh with her. It's very, very good 'cause she puts a lot of energy into learning Spanish. 'Cause she likes to speak Spanish, she likes to eat Mexican food, and she likes, hum, I think the most important thing to her is she is interested in how we are feeling, you know. I think that's why she stays in the relationships 'cause every time she asks, 'How do you feel? How is your family? How are your kids?' And that's very, very important to us 'cause no other person cares about how's your kids, how you feel. So, that's why that's very, very important.

Sandra's learning to speak Spanish was highlighted by the production women, whereas neither Sandra herself nor the other staff or board members remarked on that. In contrast, most staff and board members mentioned Sandra's educational level or race that

they had in common with Sandra. What cut across all these ascriptions was the move many participants made to describe the particular aspect(s) of Sandra's identity that they shared such as: a Spanish speaker for the production women, a White woman for Carla, and a graduate of a good university for Kaya.

*Ascriptions from Higher-status Speakers about Low-status Speakers that Indicated "They Don't Understand":* Another problematic type of ascriptions was majority members of the board members/volunteers status group ascribed positions to the production women in a way that implicated lower levels of capabilities or functioned to lower their levels of agency. Many board members and volunteers remarked on certain things that they did not think the production employees could really understand or appreciate.

In two different occasions, president of the board, Carla, mentioned the following. The first was Sandra's commitment and dedication to working with a group of women like the production workers who were different from Sandra herself in terms of backgrounds, histories, and cultural heritage. Carla explained:

It's pretty incredible that Sandra decided to start the project and with the population that was quite different from her own history and heritage and at different places, not only a different neighborhood in my hometown but totally not where she grew up. And so I am not sure if the employees of SEHW understand that, understand her. But I think they are grateful and see her as a huge, huge factor and why SEHW is around now and doing as well as it is.

The second was not appreciating the increased employability that the production women gained from working in SEHW as a social enterprise. Carla stated in the context of describing SEHW's work:

The beauty of SEHW's program side is about personal development and opening doors for the future and on the floor. While they are working they are being trained and learning about business, not just production, but management. I mean

I am sure none of them can really appreciate what kind of transferability and that kind of opportunity. All that is just incredible education, on-the-job training, and so I feel like SEHW is quite thorough and true to its mission.

Featured in an earlier excerpt, Kaya mentioned that she didn't think the production women understood the meanings of getting a university degree or having gone to a good university like MIT or Princeton when she said,

I think that they are aware that I went to school, that I got a university degree, and that I am pretty smart. But I don't think they know what that means, like they don't know what going to MIT means. Susan is a graduate of MIT. I don't think they know that, what that means.

Margaret avoided mentioning activities that she didn't think the production women would participate in such as going on a vacation. The omission seemed to imply the production women might not understand those activities or appreciate her ability to do.

The ascriptions that many board members/volunteers brought up suggested that they viewed the production women as having lower levels of ability to comprehend complicated social worlds due to their lower socioeconomic status or lower educational levels. One of the production women interviewed did have a bachelor's degree from Mexico and one of them started pursuing an associate degree when she was first laid off. These kinds of ascriptions from higher-status individuals, such as the board of directors, are problematic because their assumptions about the production women influence, to a certain extent, the future trajectories of SEHW's missions as well as the strategies for SEHW to empower the women served. This positioning of the production women as "unable" to appreciate the staff's status and the opportunities being provided may discourage their pursuit of advanced education or view their abilities as limited.

### *Empowerment across Lines of Difference*

The types and contested nature of the avowals and ascriptions related to the production employees suggest challenges for SEHW to achieve its goal of empowering low-income women. These results raise the question of how SEHW might empower across lines of differences that are rooted in divergent cultural identity positionings and how SEHW could increase the women's levels of agency. Kaya echoed those questions when she reflected on her experiences working in economic development.

So you are committed to this work, working in economic development. You are committed to empowerment. You are committed to, and just feel like you have a calling to do something like that, right? How do you do it so you are not seen as you are telling people like, 'Oh this is the best way to do it.' And you tell them how to do things but they are like, 'Yeah, you don't know anything about my world.' Exactly, that's not how I wanted it to come up at all, but it's like but where are those points where you kind of like say, 'No this is really important. We need to learn this.'

Kaya described the challenge of trying to move things forward while not wanting to tell the production women what to do. This challenge was echoed in Sandra's defining social enterprise in an earlier section as "you are in it together and you are moving things forward and it's messy and people are part of this process that you force them to be in sometimes when they don't even necessarily want to be in."

While Sandra seemed more comfortable with "pushing" production women to do things that she felt was right, Kaya seemed reflective about not wanting to be perceived as telling others what to do. At the core of Kaya's dilemma lies the question of how to empower women living with lower status and increasing their levels of agency in the long term by "pushing" them and limiting their options in the immediate context. In this project, the contested avowals and ascriptions that emerged suggest the need to call

attention to levels of privilege and agency associated with intersecting cultural identity positionings in joint meetings, trainings, or retreats as a way to navigate this dilemma.

### **Dialectical Tensions and Negotiating Status Hierarchy**

The third research question inquires what dialectical tensions characterize relationship negotiation in SEHW, and also asks what interview responses demonstrate with regard to negotiating hierarchy and the nature of status relationships in SEHW. First, I identify dialectical tensions that characterize relationship negotiation in SEHW by analyzing interview discourses about moments of connection and disconnection across status relationships. Second, I examine hierarchy and the nature of status relationships in SEHW through analyzing interview discourses featuring experiences of marginalization and normalized standards. What those experiences highlight is a pattern of relating from context-specific status positions that functioned as dominance.

#### ***Dialectical Tensions Characterizing Relationship Negotiation in SEHW***

Participants across the three status groups did not all interact with one another on a regular basis. The majority of interactions took place between staff and production employees. Also, most board members primarily interacted with Sandra and/or Alicia. The following are the dialectics that I interpreted to characterize relationship negotiations in SEHW: (a) relating as a family vs. functioning as managers and workers, and (b) equality vs. hierarchy. Both emerged dialectics relate to the debate over the organizational forms between bureaucracy and collectives<sup>31</sup> that Bordt (1997) discusses based on her study of 95 women's NPOs formed during the contemporary women's

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<sup>31</sup> According to Bordt (1997), bureaucratic structures embody a masculine ethic, rely on hierarchical relations, and imply domination and coercion, whereas collectivist organizations espouse a collectivist ideal and work to translate collectivism into organizational practices (e.g., participatory decision-making and minimal division of labor).

movement (1967-1988) in New York City. Contrary to her anticipation of women's NPOs taking the structural form of denigrating bureaucracy and romanticizing collectives, Bordt found that 73% of the NPOs in her study took the hybrid forms of professional organizations and pragmatic collectives that combined both aspects of bureaucracy and collectives.

*Relating as a Family and/or Functioning as Managers and Workers:* The first dialectic centered on the contradictory pushes and pulls in the relating processes between accepting one another as a family and treating each other as managers and workers. All participants, except Kate who was interviewed as a volunteer, described SEHW as a family-oriented, family-like organization where the norms of relating resembled those in “a big, big family” as Lani phrased it. Though many interviewed staff and employees privileged the description of SEHW as a family, SEHW in practice was a workplace where staff and employees worked together. As there are different norms governing family relationships and workplace relationships, interviewed staff and employees had to negotiate the contradictions between relating as a family and working together as workers. This tension is best exemplified in Lucia's comment below of her negotiating between relating as “we're family” and working with the employees as the program manager that required her to exercise influence.

They [the production employees] can say for the longest time that we're family, but it's more than that. In fact, like me, I am their friend, but I also send letters [reporting domestic abuse]. And they respect that, they respect me. In fact they tell me, ‘Well you know what I like about you is that you are very straight forward and you in a respectful way tell us what we are doing wrong.’ So they don't turn around and say, ‘Well I don't want anything to do with you.’ But in fact they keep on working with me and in the work that I do and if they decided that they're not going to do that, that can jeopardize my work definitely. It hasn't happened yet, thank God.

What distinguished SEHW as a family-centered workplace were its (a) family-based social programs, (b) family-focused communication topics, and (c) family-oriented organizational activities. While all these family-oriented programs, activities, and events enabled the women in SHEW to relate as a family and help build solidarity, they minimized the women's roles as workers and deemphasized workplace relationships. The privileging of a family environment was dominant in SHEW and enabled/constrained a familial process of relating. This is best illustrated below in Janet's characterization of SEHW as "a familial organization."

I think SEHW is much more on the end of kind of familial kind of organization, a lot of celebrating, identifying with one another's issues, whatever these issues are, and not as much of an emphasis on hierarchal differences, who is smarter than whom and all of that. I don't get much of a sense of that.

First, at the programmatic level, programs such as the onsite daycare and the Good Families and Schools program functioned to bring the presence of family life into SEHW and integrate familial relationships into workplace experiences. Margaret remarked on the family-work integration as one of the things she was impressed with SEHW. She said:

One thing that really impressed me is that they [SEHW] don't really separate out that kind of familial relationship from their working experience. I mean that's kind of intertwined a lot. That really struck me when I went there. I mean I really believe that they are concerned with the whole person and the whole family, and more of a holistic view of the way the relationships and the business work.

In response to the needs of the production employees, programs like these that integrated family and work seemed to attract and retain workers that privileged their families over their work/career. Sias (2009) argues that work-family balance has become increasingly difficult in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with lack of job security and advanced communication technologies that "make employees accessible to organizations virtually 24 hours a day, 7

days a week” (p. 199). Traditionally, management approaches emphasized organizational processes that removed emotions and personal issues from the workplace until this past decade. Scholars and practitioners now realize the impact of work-family balance on organizational productivity (Sias, 2009). Given this context, SEHW’s approach of using mission-driven programs to integrate family and work can be considered unique and innovative.

Second, at the communicative level, the family climate in SEHW enabled and constrained the dominance of family-focused conversations such as asking about each others’ families and talking about family-related issues. This can be exemplified in Margaret’s example of relating to the production employees in her class through talking about “family things.”

Definitely family things, so we could talk about family things. That and also because I think the people there and I think it’s probably very common among Hispanic families. They have a strong family connection and the people that I taught there talked about their families a lot, and I’m close to my family also even though it’s small. So I mean we would talk about that.

This family-oriented communication climate might function to perpetuate the employment of only mothers and make it challenging for someone who did not share similar close family views to fit in.

Third, at the social level, there were organizational activities, both formal and informal, that were normalized in SEHW and functioned to enable and constrain the women to relate to one another as a family. The normalization of these social activities was most evident in Lucia’s comment about how Rhena, SEHW’s office manager, presented SEHW to newcomers and expected them to observe those activities. She explained:



In fact, when Rhena meets with the new employees she goes, ‘Oh and we have some collections and...we have this and that. That’s what we do because we are a part of a family, so we need to help whoever is in need.’ And so that’s interesting that they even said it during the interview with the newcomers, that they see it as a regular thing that happens here. And so if you’re going to be part of SEHW, you need to be part of this as well.

The frequently mentioned SEHW’s formal events included annual Christmas party and birthday celebrations. While those organizational activities were institutionalized for relational purposes, they also had impact on the work of SEHW. Sarah, a self-claimed “production junkie,” cautioned the potential downsides of those social events as they affected everyone in SEHW. She stated:

We are going to have our Christmas party and we have to stop two hours early to clean and the ladies know that you might just have to work really hard after the party to make that up. You can’t just wipe them off the counter. So, it’s difficult. People say, ‘Oh, SEHW has such nice Christmas party.’ Well, yeah, we have to make that up.

Informally, there were activities such as offering prayers, donating food, and collecting money for those women in need. Fonda, the production manager, described below the normative act of offering prayers as requested for family-related issues.

Like today, we have a break for one lady. She has a family problem and she asked for a prayer. Every time when she has to receive the therapy, we have to make that prayer for her. So we are very close.

Since those activities were informal in nature, instances had occurred where someone’s need was not fulfilled or someone felt left out. For example, Lani described below her surprise when she did not receive anything from SEHW when she was ill.

I had lymphedema two years ago and I didn’t get any flowers. I didn’t get a card. I didn’t get anything from here. And then what happened was when I came back they were collecting money for somebody. And I was working with my friend. We both did cutting. And she said, ‘You know I am not gonna give because when my father-in-law died they didn’t give me anything.’ You know she said that. And then I just said, ‘Don’t feel bad. I didn’t get anything either.’ She said, ‘You didn’t?’ I said, ‘No.’ And then I left it at that.

Though those activities were informal and voluntary, there seemed to be peer pressure to conform, and inconsistency of not recognizing all women's needs. Other potential downsides could be the perpetuation of higher status for senior members and the exclusion of newer members. Kaya, a former employee/board member, commented on the worrying in the past about newcomers not being able to fit into an already tight family.

We always used to say, 'New people coming to SEHW, it's really, really difficult.' Because it was like a very tight family for a new worker to come in. It was always not sure if they would make it. You know what I mean? It was always hard. It's hard that way.

Lucia echoed the problematic consequence of the "tight family" functioning to exclude those who might not fit into or share similar struggles as those who were already in "a pretty closed circle." As a junior member who had only been in SEHW for five years, Lucia described SEHW as a "closed circle" and attributed her fitting in to their shared struggles as first-generation Mexican immigrants. She explained:

And it's a pretty closed circle, so you're either in or you're out...That's what they [production women] said, 'Why did Lucia fit in so quickly?' And they said, 'Well, because she was one of us.' That was the reasoning that they said, that she was one of us...It's like the same struggles when it comes to being an immigrant, not speaking the language, so having to learn the language. And being a woman, having kids, struggling, so the same things and not holding back, so they knew that I was having the same struggles and that I have had the same struggles, so I shared my life without any holding back, so they were like 'Oh, so she is one of us I guess.'

Lucia's comment also exemplified using the strategy of sharing struggles and being an insider or struggling less and being excluded from the existing SEHW family.

Part of the context for privileging familial relationships in SEHW was that most of the immigrant women came to the United States by themselves without their families;

thus SEHW emerged as an adopted family for its employees to receive familial support. Felicia commented she felt Rhena, a long-term Mexican immigrant staff, was “kind of like her mammy” as she was older and gave her advice. Emily described a teary moment when Fonda and Sandra visited her after she had been away from SEHW for 15 days. She said:

Before Joseph was born, the doctors told me that I had to stay in bed. And we were having the Christmas festival for the children. When the festival was finished, to my surprise, Fonda and Sandra arrived, ah, and I started crying because I saw them. It had been about 15 days without seeing them. They went to my house.

As exemplified by Emily’s example, some of the connections between the women in SEHW ran deep, especially those who had been with SEHW since its very beginning and had gone through many ups and downs together.

Overall, the dominance of family-based events, activities, and communication climate characterized the relationship negotiation of privileging familial relationships and minimized workplace relationships. Despite the emphasis on family-work integration, SEHW was still a nonprofit business and a workplace. The privileging of familial relationships had both positive and negative impact on SEHW’s organizational productivity. Familial relationships had a positive impact that included solidarity and a sense of ownership of SEHW. Lucia’s comment exemplified a sense of solidarity in SEHW:

What’s really important is that there has been all these conflicts and all these issues people have had with each other or with groups, and with managers, but when something happens to one of us, everybody comes together and that’s why they always talk about being a family because then everybody feels for the other person and so it’s pretty interesting. If I had something against you, I put it aside and I’m with you.

Also, integrating family into SEHW's work in some ways helped increase SEHW's productivity through the employees' enhanced concentration on their work as they knew their kids were close or they could attend to them if needed. This benefit of integrating family into work is supported by Rothboard's (2001) findings that family enriched work engagement for women, but not for men, in her study.

Some of the negative impact included perpetuation of higher status for senior members as elders, exclusion of newcomers, and almost unquestioned retention of mothers who prioritized families. Also, there was preliminary evidence of supervisor-subordinate relationships that resembled mother-daughter relationships as suggested by Fonda's comment below.

You have to explain to the person and they understand 100%. You have to explain why you do what you do. That's why I compare them with my daughters... Sometimes people say, 'Oh Fonda loves another person more than me.' It's like a family, like I have three daughters, and it's the same. It's like, 'Mommy, why do you love more Molly than me? You give to Molly this one and you gave me nothing.' It's like a family. Actually I told the ladies, I say, 'Do you like this? You're like my daughters exactly. Please, you're adults, not teenagers.'

Embedded in Fonda's comment was the implication that this type of familial relationship might create something like sibling rivalry and place more burdens and responsibilities on the supervisors, thus negatively affecting SEHW's organizational productivity. Also, the last part of the quotation includes some disciplining of the production women to act like adults.

*Equality and/or Hierarchy:* The second dialectic revolved around the tensions in SEHW between emphasizing equal status for all (i.e., all members having equal voice, equal say, and equal influence) and hierarchy with the staff (i.e., directors, managers, and supervisors) having higher levels of influence and access to resources. Hampden-Turner

and Trompenaars (1997) discuss “equality vs. hierarchy” as cultural factors to understand cultural differences in global business. Participants predominantly described their relationships as based in equality that emphasized trust, respect of differences, and equal participation. At the same time, most participants struggled with realizing the ideal of equality for everyone at SEHW in their day to day practices. The growth of SEHW demanded the structuring of responsibilities and decision-making. The following comment from Kaya underscored this tension between equality and hierarchical management.

I think in a lot of ways where women’s organizations are a little naïve it’s when they think everyone can be equal and I don’t think that’s true. I think in a work structure in the type of work that SEHW is doing you need different levels of management, different levels of responsibility, and different levels of accountability.

Waldron (2003) argues that workplace relationships are uniquely influenced by organizational characteristics such as power differences, multiple relationship forms, networks, task characteristics, and procedure structure. Given this context of calling for equality but needing hierarchical status levels, the dominant forms of this dialectic included: (a) oscillating between “we are in this together” and “subordinates, you have to do your part,” particularly evident among the staff and supervisors; (b) creating different levels of control or supervision, while trying to assure equality; and (c) affording decision-making processes more and less transparency.

The overall tension between equality and hierarchy was partly rooted in the historical evolution of SEHW. In initial stages of SEHW, it was realistic and possible to strive for participatory decision making, equally shared information, and comparable levels of responsibilities. For example, the board of directors initially consisted of SEHW

staff and production employees; they conducted their meetings in Spanish until 3-4 years ago. When SEHW slowly grew from employing 25 women to 48 women and also added another line of work (i.e., glass/title mosaic-based work), it became necessary to create different levels of management and structural hierarchy to achieve productivity. For instance, Fonda was appointed the production manager when SEHW started fabric printing. Also, the struggles between ensuring equality and structuring different levels of responsibilities were documented in a report dated January, 2003, to one of the funders. It termed the struggles as “difficulty of leading among peers” as a result of some employees, such as Fonda and Rhena, being promoted to “leadership roles” and “managers” taking on more responsibility. The report suggested that Sandra, the executive director, play “the role of the ‘heavy’ to alleviate some of the pressures placed on managers,” and also recommended that SEHW as a whole set policies to help clarify expectations.

The new “chain of command” led to different views across status positions for the staff and production employees. The following excerpt from Greta as a supervisor highlighted how managers and supervisors perceived production needs differently than the production employees.

It is a little difficult because they [the production employees] do not understand all of the process. They dedicate themselves solely to do the work; however, they don't know it is necessary to bring out products because the client is waiting. Because it is necessary to bring out products, and, let's say, money, because we have to pay for this plant.

Fonda echoed these divergent realities. She explained:

Every time I talk to the ladies about the importance to make the goals, for example, it's not always, ‘You have to make twenty.’ I say, ‘No, you have to make the goal because if you don't make your goals, we lose money. Who

supports us? We have to pay the rent. We have to pay your salary, electricity, gas, and all the utilities.'

As a board member, Kaya confirmed the reality of hierarchical relations and endorsed the necessity for certain autocratic decision making by the staff. She said:

I think in the type of work that SEHW is doing you need different levels of management, different levels of responsibility, and different levels of accountability. So having Sandra being the executive director, and having her make the ultimate decisions and I am okay with that. In terms of having Fonda be a production manager, and having people under her and her being able to say to her staff, "This is what you need to do" I am okay with that.

First, the tensions between equality and hierarchy in SEHW most often emerged in the challenge to balance between "we are in this together," which is more affiliation based, and "you have to do your part," which features control. This challenge was most prevalent in the staff and supervisors' accounts as implicated by their higher status and their roles to not only push SEHW's agenda forward but also support everyone in this process. Also, this challenge was more arduous for the staff and supervisors because, to achieve their goals, they needed to balance between being supportive of the production employees and pushing them. Alicia commented on this balancing act in her relationships with production women.

They [the production women] are who I serve and I need to acknowledge our mission in terms of what they need and accommodate that in an effective and efficient way. Yet at the same time push back so that there is leadership development and so that there is engagement and push our agenda forward as well.

So, the staff and managers needed to negotiate between cultivating a sense of a collective 'we' and asserting their higher status to push the employees to do things that they might not want to do. The following excerpt from Sandra highlighted this challenging balance act.

There is pressure and I think that we [the staff] can push. It's our balancing act always. It's the challenge and it's a challenge always with the business and with the people. It's like, 'Shit, nobody is in the GED classes.' 'Why aren't you in the GED class?' 'Well, basically I am tired and I don't want to do it.' 'Well, tough shit, you are going to the GED class, because guess what, we pay for it, and you need it. If we are closed, you are not gonna be able to get another job and you need to get your GED, so go and do it.' I push...I mean, 'Come on! You need to do your part. We've done our part. You need to do your part.'

As a workplace that privileged equality, managing this tension became a much more challenging lesson for the staff and supervisors. This was exemplified in Sr. Brook's comment about the staff needing to "get tough" when some of the employees were not measuring up.

I know there was a time when some of the women weren't working up to snuff. They weren't working enough. And, so they had to get tough...The management team was carrying all the burdens, and they weren't passing enough down to the women who were doing the work. And once they started sharing more, the women began to understand that 'I need to do my part. I am very much a part of this. I'd better do my job or we are not gonna make it together.' And I think they've learned that.

The call for equality complicated how the staff and supervisors managed this tension between "we're in this together" and pushing production women to do their part.

Second, the struggle to balance equality and hierarchy also manifested in the emphasis on the need for supervision while maintaining peer-like relationships. Earlier Fonda stressed she emphasized to her subordinates that she had different responsibilities instead of higher levels of power. Most participating production employees also stressed different responsibilities in SEHW. For instance, when asked about different levels at SEHW, Felicia emphasized that she did not see them as different status levels but simply different roles and responsibilities. She said:

It's not like level. I don't like to talk about levels. I like to talk about roles. Yeah, sometimes it can be levels, but the roles are kind of enough. I like feel when you said 'level,' it's more like other companies where you don't have relationships.



This one is here because he is good at this, and you cannot talk to them. It's not like that at all here. That's why I say responsibilities... And when I say responsibility, maybe one of the people who is there [gesturing at the bottom] has more knowledge than the people who is here [gesturing at the top]. Only the role he is playing is different than the other person. That's why levels are problematic. That's why I use responsibilities.

In SEHW, the challenge is not only to institutionalize different levels of responsibilities and accountability but to do so without endangering existing friendly relationships. Thus, the tensions between equality and supervision placed certain relational constraints in SEHW, particularly among the Mexican/Hispanic staff members like Fonda, Rhena, and Lucia. This was evident in Sandra's comment below. She argued that Fonda and Rhena ought to be the ones that related to the employees, instead of her.

I learned as I got older that the really appropriate way for people to develop relationships was peers. What I did was create the opportunity for people to have peer support. I think when I came here I know that there was a lot of mutual respect with the individual women that worked here, but I am not the primary person that relates to them. That's for Fonda, for Rhena, and for people that are working with them to develop. I play a big role in the strategies and in the thinking.

Lastly, this dialectic manifested in the challenge to afford decision-making processes more and/or less transparency in SEHW. This dialectic enabled and constrained the staff to limit explanations to the production women that suggested hierarchy even though the staff members were the ones who made most decisions. Alicia spoke as the program director and commented below on her view of the decision-making process.

We [the staff/managers] don't afford some decisions a lot of process, and I would say that's mostly reflected in how we communicate the way we make decisions. So maybe to us as managers, it's a lot clear, but not necessarily to the production employees. And I think that opens itself to potential problems that we either see them sometimes or just rumblings that we are not aware of it, but I think that's true.

From the production women's perspective, not knowing how decisions were made triggered some resentment toward the staff and/or supervisors' instructions that seemed confusing or abrupt. This resentment was evident in Lani's description of reactions to staff direction by comments such as 'that bitch.'

I think there is no animosity. I think we all get along great, I really do. I mean we will say, 'This thing or that.' And sometimes the girls will say [whispering] 'that bitch' you know, but it is nothing that stays there, nothing that you carry it on with you. It's just at that moment. Maybe you will be doing something and they [the staff] will come in and tell you to do something else. And someone will whisper 'that bitch' in response, but it's nothing. I think we all get along real well.

While the production women might not disobey or openly challenge the staff's decisions, they sometimes expressed their resentment in the form of resistance, such as advising each other to slow down and not meet their production goals. This shows that sometimes production women responded to staff moves to control through exerting their own influence on productivity.

Together the valorizing of familial relationships and the overemphasis on equality have implications for SEHW's work. Maintaining close family ties and having an equal voice could function productively to build solidarity and reinforce cohesiveness, they also could function unproductively to silence dissent and minority voices, to exclude newcomers with dissimilar identities, and to deny the existence of conflicts that were necessary and inevitable in interdependent relationships. For instance, when asked if she could recall a story of tension or conflict, Emily responded, "No. It is difficult for me to answer that question because I have never had conflict or nothing like that." Also, the uniqueness of SEHW as a social enterprise with dual missions could incur additional demands on newcomers. This metaphor of "drinking the kool-aid" from Sandra, in reference to the Jim Jones cult, summed up what it might take for someone to become

part of the SEHW family and succeed. She explained the important of commitment and affection toward SEHW and its workers, especially from those who were different from the majority employees such as Sarah.

I believe in it so much to drink the kool-aid, you know! I believe in this... You have to figure it out how to, because old people can't just say, 'This is how it was in the old days and this is how it is.' How does that translate, how do you keep that alive as newer people come? But I think that you gotta drink the kool-aid. I have to feel. Sarah, you know who is very different in many ways and can be harsh, but you know but nobody cares more about SEHW than Sarah does. And she cares about the women, she cares about them differently, but like the reason why you know she can do what she does and run this production thing.

Overall, both emerged dialectics suggest a struggle in SEHW over the desire for a collectivist ideal in organizing relationships and the reality of needing a bureaucratic structure in terms of decision-making and a division of labor. In negotiating and managing both dialectics, SEHW as a whole privileged relating as a family and equal involvement in management that embodied and espoused a collectivist ideal. The negotiation of relational dialectics in SEHW had clear implications for the work of SEHW. For example, given a dominant family environment in SEHW, it was normalized for the staff to represent to the board the voices and needs of the production employees.

Carla described:

Because it's not possible to have a relationship with any one or all of those employees even if I feel like I have a somewhat relationship with a couple of them, but I trust that their needs are being represented fairly and accurately by Sandra and by Alicia and by other staff members who are on the board as kind of liaison. I feel like they are speaking for the rest of the employees and I think that they are, even if we don't talk in those terms, but I think that is what's happening.

The staff had difficulties representing to the board the struggles of many production employees as first-generation Mexican immigrant women, because their struggles outside and inside of SEHW didn't fit the "happy family" image. Also, the ways in which SEHW

members negotiated the dialectical tensions in their relationships were constructed by and reinforced status hierarchies.

### *Status Hierarchy within SEHW*

The descriptions of status positions reproducing hierarchy and dominance in SEHW came from three types of interview discourses. The first was interview discourses with participants positioned as “minority” in relation to a contrasting majority position. The second was from interview discourses where participants commented on a social norm or social standard that was violated. The third was responses from those in higher status positions about what was natural and normal; these functioned ultimately as domination as well. Five particular types of status levels were positioned as dominant in the context of SEHW: (a) being women/mothers, (b) languages, (c) manager roles such as executive director, program director, production manager, (d) seniority in SEHW, and (e) business backgrounds/skills.

*Being Women/Mothers:* Although not many participants commented on their sex and gendered communication, all interviewed participants from SEHW were women and the majority of them were mothers. The interviewees did not call attention to their sex, because there was rarely male presence in SEHW to remind them of their female identities. Thus, it was taken for granted that all workers in SEHW were women and mostly moms. Felicia explained how she felt SEHW treated its workers not just as workers, but as persons, women, and moms: “Don’t see the people only as the workers. The people are persons, are moms, are women, you know.”

When asked if a man could work in SEHW, several production women told me about a male cutter who worked part-time in the evenings to demonstrate that men did

and could work in SEHW. However, the very presence of this one man working part-time when most women left work only underscored the dominance of being female in SEHW. Sarah was one of the very few that openly acknowledged the potential challenges of having males working in SEHW. She explained in the context of talking about her understanding of the hiring criteria in SEHW:

First of all they looked at ethics. Second of all they could sew...And I have had men apply, we have had that; I don't think they would be happy here. And I don't. They open up a whole can of worms as you can imagine. You know men, as we all know, they are pretty jealous.

In SEHW, most workers were mothers. The dominance of mothers in SEHW was most salient in discussing social programs and services that SEHW provided such as the daycare and the Good Families and Schools program. Also, both programs had been implemented early on in SEHW's history and were the most frequently mentioned programs by the participants. The following comment from Janet illustrates the dominance of not just women but mothers in SEHW.

It's not just about a group of women. It's mostly a group of mothers and that also adds another kind of dimension because when you are a mother I think you have to multitask, you have to do all those things that you are responsible for. Then you could relate to each much as mothers too in terms of the extra burdens that you carry and extra duties that you have.

Overall, the hierarchy and dominance of women and mothers in SEHW functioned to dictate the type of manufacturing work it produced, the employees it hired, and the programs it offered.

*Languages:* Spanish was the primary language in SEHW that functioned and constituted dominance for Spanish speakers in certain contexts and in certain ways.

While Spanish was undoubtedly the dominant language in SEHW, over the years there had been efforts to promote English such as offering English classes to the employees.

One domain of SEHW where Spanish was no long the dominant language was the board meetings. Until 4 years ago, the board had consisted primarily of internal employees and board meetings had been conducted in Spanish. Then, Sandra made efforts to instill new blood among the board of directors and with the new additions, board meetings have been run in English. Still Spanish remains the primary language in the daily operations of SEHW. The necessity of hiring a bilingual program director to fill Alicia's position was indicative of the dominance of Spanish in SEHW for production and English for administration.

The "protest" from Sarah about having Spanish as the primary language in SEHW highlighted the contested nature of the language. As an English speaker with limited Spanish, Sarah evaluated negatively the norm of having Spanish as the primary language in SEHW. She said:

I would think many, many other places where their primary language is English. And our primary language is Spanish. I don't think that's a good thing, because I don't think that's the real world. It's not the real world. I don't think our ladies can deal well outside of here... The things that I don't like about SEHW and I don't think it is healthy that we speak Spanish. I tried to preach what happens if one of our ladies had a car accident and needed a police. What happens? You know if we really love them, we wouldn't let that happen to them. That they are out there in emergency and they can't speak English. I don't think it is good for their children either. I just very strongly disagree. It has changed a bit since 10 years ago, but it wasn't me that changed it. It was one of our tutors. The tutor said, 'What's up with this? We volunteer our time.' And I went hooray.

Whereas Sandra accommodated by learning Spanish, it did not seem that Sarah did. So, Sarah was glad when someone protested and helped to promote English in SEHW board meetings and programs to teach English. Still, in terms of the staff and production women, Sarah remained one of the very few English speakers in SEHW.

When interacting with the production women, it seemed that Spanish was not only dominant but also required to ensure SEHW's productivity. One of the things Alicia mentioned when I asked for examples where her multiple identities worked effectively in SEHW was her intervening to request Spanish interpretation on behalf of production employees. She explained:

Let's say that we are having a problem with the employee and we really need to be clear about what's going on, and I know Sandra is the one who is interacting with that person. I intervened and said, 'You know what? You need to have somebody here who understands your perspective and can convey it in Spanish.' And so it has got its benefits and its challenges.

*Management Roles:* Discourses about management roles functioning as hierarchy mostly came from interviewed staff except Sarah. Some staff took their status positions as normal, while others were more reflective about the higher status that came with their designated roles. Sarah was the only who did not remark on her higher status probably because Sarah's position as the productions director intersected with her inability to speak Spanish. Sandra and Lucia both took their higher status positions as "normal" given their roles. Sarah took it as natural that she should be "the bottom line" and make the final decisions given her role as the executive directive when she said, "I mean I have to be the bottom line." Lucia considered it normal that she was treated as "an authority figure" given her role as the program manager. She stated, "I'm part of the management team. I guess even the ladies see me as like an authority figure. They do."

Alicia and Fonda seemed more reflective about their higher status positions. Alicia was aware that sometimes employees garnered respect for her as the program director. She stated when talking about how her multiple identities influenced her work in

SEHW, “There is respect for me I mean from them as the manager coming in and they are always very polite and inviting me more.”

From what I gathered, Fonda started out working as a production employee and was later promoted to a staff member based on the “natural leadership” she exhibited. Alicia discussed the normative process of promoting individuals based on this notion of “natural leadership” and said, “People who expressed natural leadership in their work and just kind of began assuming more responsibilities that it wasn’t hard to say, ‘Woo, this person is already displaying a lot more.’” Historically in SEHW, there was a particular relational dynamic with decision making and handling conflict as documented in a narrative report dated December 31, 2002, to one of the funders. That report discussed a dynamic where peers were reluctant to “let individuals advance to take on roles with more authority in the decision-making process.” Given this context, Fonda negotiated this strategy of emphasizing her responsibilities as different from the production employees to deal with some of the mixed-status relationships she found herself in. She explained:

They treat me like I’m the boss, but I’m not more than the worker person. But they have to understand my responsibilities are different. This is very important. So every time when I talk to them I say, ‘I don’t have more power than you. I’m the same, but I have different responsibilities.’...In the production if they don’t make the goals, if they don’t have the good quality control, or something like that. And every time I mention to them before I start talking, I say, ‘Do you know I hate this part of my job. But I have to do it and it’s hard for me to say, “You don’t make your goals. You don’t make the good quality control. You’re not in time.” But please you have to understand that I have my responsibilities. I have to respond to Sandra in numbers, special numbers. If the numbers are negative, what happens? I’m not a good supervisor because I don’t know the production. I don’t know the goals.’

Embedded in Fonda’s comment was also internal hierarchy within the staff. For instance, Fonda reported to Sandra, and Lucia was under Alicia as the program manager. So, there was the division between upper management level (e.g., Sandra and Alicia) and lower



management level (e.g., Fonda, Lucia, and Rhena). All the lower management level staff were self-identified first-generational Mexican immigrants, whereas none of the upper management staff were. While this arrangement seemed to facilitate the productivity of SEHW, it may unintentionally function to accentuate certain race-based, class-based, and education-based hierarchies.

*Seniority in SEHW:* Seniority, in terms of number of years working in SEHW, also functioned to establish status hierarchies. Seniority was most salient in discourses from the participants who were the youngest members of SEHW (those having been in SEHW for about 5 years). Both Lucia and Greta discussed the difficulties they experienced adjusting and settling into their managerial and supervisory roles. Lucia was brought in as a new program manager, and Greta was promoted to a supervisor under Fonda after working as a production employee for six months. Lucia remarked on the resentment toward her not just as a manager but as an outsider coming into SEHW with higher status.

I think at the beginning they [the production women] were resentful. They actually resented the fact that here was a stranger coming in and telling you what to do and sometimes challenged me saying, 'Why are you telling me what to do?' In fact, one of the ladies told me once, 'You know I don't even know why they brought a stranger to this position. I kind of think that someone here could have done it.' And I was like 'Probably.' As a matter of fact, I just said, 'Yeah! Maybe they could have done it, but you know there are different skills that they need to have. And they can probably learn them, but right now I don't think that there is anyone who has had the experience that I have.'

The resentment toward a new member with higher status evidenced the norm in SEHW that senior members usually had higher status in relation to junior members. In Greta's case, she was treated differently after she was promoted to a supervisor as a very junior production employee. When I asked Greta what it was like to be promoted to a supervisor

and if that influenced her relationships with the other women, she hesitated and took time articulating what she wanted to say to me. She explained:

Well, uhm, at the beginning it was a little difficult to go from floor employee to becoming a supervisor. It was a little difficult because of the, uhm, how do I explain it, because only due to the access that was given to me.

Although Greta commented that it was “a little difficult”, Lucia explained to me after the interview that when Greta was first promoted, some of the production women were mean to her and Greta cried almost every day.

The seniority-based hierarchy in SEHW was also evident in discourses that suggested certain treatments reserved for senior members. In particular, it was when a senior did not get what was expected that evidenced the normative hierarchy based on seniority in SEHW. For example, Dora responded to my question about if her relationships with Fonda and Rhena changed after they became managers by explaining that many people had asked why she as a senior member did not get promoted to a manager as Fonda and Rhena did. She said:

I don't think we have changed because many people asked me, 'Why do you not have something like that?' But for me it's very difficult because I have three kids and I would like to have my time with my kids, and because they (the staff) need to stay here in the afternoon and spend more time. I would like to leave at 4 o'clock. I want to go because my kids are at school or in the programs. So, that's why I told the people, 'Well, it's my time for me. From 7:30am-4pm, that is okay. I don't want anything else 'cause my children are my priority.'

Dora's being asked and having to justify not having been promoted underscored the normative expectations that the most senior production employee ought to be promoted.

Besides promotion, another expectation was that senior members should be the last ones to be laid off. For instance, Dora remarked on her initial surprise to be laid off as one of the most senior members in SHEW:

Now I don't have work and another person has work. And I think, 'Oh, my god. I have stayed here for 15 years and now I don't have work.' And another person has been here for one year. I think that sometimes I feel bad but I understand 'cause SEHW is like that. Sometimes some people leave and others get involved, so we just need to wait. And I say, 'Well, I don't need to feel bad.'

Alicia also questioned the laying off of people with seniority in SEHW in the context of discussing the need to increase transparency. She said, "With the issues of layoff which were very production-oriented, what was the criteria with things like that? Why do people who have seniority at the organization face layoffs you know?"

Overall, the seniority-based hierarchy in SEHW highlighted not only expectations of how senior members ought to be treated in SEHW but also the implicit connection between seniority and managerial ability. Considering that SEHW had a history of high retention rate, it became important to make explicit different expectations related to seniority. As of May 2006, 50% of the first-generation Mexican immigrants who was first involved in and helped to start SEHW remained in SEHW.

*Business Backgrounds/Skills:* Business-related backgrounds/skills functioned to produce higher status position in SEHW particularly with staff and board members who did not share the majority identities as first-generation Mexican immigrants. Considering that SEHW was a social enterprise serving Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants, non-Spanish, non-Mexican, non-Latina staff and board members, besides Sandra, were invited to join specifically for their business backgrounds and skills. Kaya was invited to join SEHW because she brought the needed "pattern-marking and fabric printing" skills. Also, she had a family background in women's apparel industry as her father "did a lot of import and export trade with Japan with Canadians designers for high-end women clothing." Sarah was hired to run production because she understood the business and

was skilled in pricing even though, as Sandra said, SEHW was “such as odd department for her in terms of work environment.” Lyny, who Sandra described as a chief financial officer of many “big tech companies with blonde hair and big blue eyes,” was hired because of her financial management and forecasting skills. Unlike the program director who had to be bilingual and had experiences working with low-income communities, production-related staff and board-related positions privileged individuals with business backgrounds and skills.

Overall, the ways that status relationships emerged and functioned in SEHW highlighted status hierarchy as contextually contingent on not only the individuals involved in SEHW but also the work of SEHW. Also, the different types of status hierarchy that emerged underscored the complicity of intersecting identities, roles, and positions in SEHW.

### **Discourse, Ideology, and Reproduction of Social Order**

The fourth research question inquires about the ideological implications of interview discourses and organizational documents related to productivity, group relations, and the broader social order. I address this question by uncovering the ideologies, structural (re)productions and social order that are implicated.

#### ***Ideologies about Organizational Productivity***

Underlying the competing discourses about SEHW’s organizational productivity was the ideology of capitalism that masked and silenced contradictory views and voices about programs. Within SEHW, the ideology of capitalism took the form of a belief claim that stated “SEHW needs to be profitable.” Reinforcing this ideological belief, competing discourses across the status groups were evident: (a) production over programs, and (b)

working with low-income women vs. low-income Mexican immigrant women. This ideological belief in profit functioned to reproduce lower class status for the production women and the alienation and criminalization of Mexican immigrants.

*SEHW Needs to be Profitable:* Across the discourse from the status groups, there was a tendency to emphasize SEHW's organizational productivity. This claim took the form of an unquestioned belief claim about SEHW's need for continuation and growth as a profitable and self-sufficient NPO. Participants across the three status groups were willing to "do whatever" for "the good of SEHW" to continue and grow as exemplified in Lucia's comment below.

What is unique about this place that they [production employees] don't see it as a place where, 'I just go to work and go home. It's a part of me and so then I don't want it to disappear, and so then I'll do whatever I need to make sure that it continues on.'

This ideological belief was reinforced by the need to be continually profitable in an economic context where most manufacturing work was outsourced to developing nations. The need for profitability was also bolstered by SEHW's strategic choice to focus on sewing-based, "blue collar" work with minimum job skills transferability for the production women.

The importance of making profits to achieve self-sufficiency is also illustrated in Carla's statement, "SEHW makes through the business 80%~ of its budget...I cannot name another nonprofit in the United States that I know of that has that kind of self-sufficiency, especially at the scale they have." SEHW's achieving self-sufficiency, even in an economic downturn, was naturalized and never questioned. One of the SEHW's funding strategies as stated in one document was "to annually decrease our grant support, replacing it with increasing sales income." Given that funding sources available for NPOs

often require certain restrictions, SEHW preferred to “make their own money” and had the flexibility to determine their programmatic needs. Carla explained this preference,

Because you are not at the whim of X foundation or government entities. It’s like they are churning out their own budgets and have all kinds of flexibility. SEHW is structured in terms of the depth of the program and flexibility they have to really truly meet the needs of the people who work there in a very exclusive way. That to me says so much, the fact that they have their own money. They’re making their own money.

This belief in “We can do this; we can sustain the business” is similar to the Horatio Alger myth that anyone who works hard enough can be successful in the United States. What these ideological beliefs excluded were other options such as choosing social business ventures that were not based in manufacturing and simultaneously expanding grant sources and/or fundraising campaigns.

*Naturalizing Discourses of Production over Programs:* The ideological belief of becoming a profitable nonprofit business functioned to naturalize production/business sources; this impacted both the short-term and long-term productivity of SEHW. In terms of short-term productivity, it privileged the business side of SEHW and positioned economic development as the primary, if not only, means of empowerment for low-income women. Thus, business profitability outweighed the mission-driven programs. For instance, Sarah, the operations director, spoke of the importance of “keeping the customers happy” because the customers were “the boss” of SEHW. She said:

I have my whole set of people that have demands on me outside of here. I can’t focus on making this one particular group of people happy. Like I tell the ladies, I am not your boss, our customer is our boss. We have to keep our customers happy or we won’t have him, so that is the demand. It’s not me. I mean it’s the demands from the customer. I am just the messenger really.

Even Lucia, the program manager, described the production women’s willingness to make sacrifices to sustain SEHW’s business.

When there are hard times like now, the layoffs, not a lot of money, people really bonded and said, 'It's ok if you need to cut my hours. It's ok if I have to come without pay. It's okay. So it's for the good of the organization because part of it is mine. It's not just the work and the job that I'm doing. It's my organization.'

Though there were specific times reserved for mission-driven programs, such as English classes, most of them seemed to be scheduled toward the end of a day when employees were tired. All production women still started their day in productions.

The privileging of business deterred exploring alternative means for SEHW to achieve its goal of empowering low-income (Mexican immigrant) women. In the context of increasing globalization when most manufacturing work is outsourced to developing nations, there is limited job transferability for the SEHW production employees' skills. At one critical juncture, SEHW modified its mission from increasing employability to creating "decent jobs," instead of exploring alternatives such as shifting its focus to microcredit lending or advancing its mission-driven programs. Sandra explained:

When we started we were very clear that we are not a job training program for anybody to go somewhere else. First of all, because all the industries that we are in are gone. I mean there is nowhere else to go. I mean all the women that are in seamstress's place have worked in all the places that have gone off shore. This industry does not exist in this state anymore. So we are the one.

As "the one" of its kind, that means, if SEHW fails, the production women would have to learn new job skills and start over.

In terms of long-term productivity, it is necessary for SEHW to strategize in order to meet needs and challenges in the long run instead of reacting to short-term crises. Janet pointed out that one of the long-term goals for SEHW could be cultivating the next generation of Hispanic leadership and members of the management team. She explained:

Sandra remains committed but so how much though, how much will she be able to do let's say over the next 10 years? I think it's a question, in terms of, in a sense, what is a good way for the organization to evolve. I think there is an issue

about, is there another Sandra in the wings who can kind of take over from her, so she becomes the business like the chairman of the board, if somebody else becomes the president, so she could step back a little bit, or ‘what next?’ I think is a question... Probably one of her big challenges is finding a replacement for herself, developing a management cohort that would be able to, whether is shared management or whether there is someone who is clearly gonna be the next president or executive director, or whatever you want to call that position you know. And I think it’s a big challenge you know.

Privileging business may deny SEHW the capability to explore alternatives that might better meet its mission and also may ignore the necessity of long-term strategic planning.

*Naturalizing Low-income Women over Low-income Mexican Immigrant Women:*

Given the anti-immigration and anti-Hispanic immigrant political climate, the ideological belief in profitability functioned to normalize the inconsistency of SEHW’s work in public discourse as opposed to in practice. In the public discourse, SEHW was constructed a social enterprise for creating intergenerational wealth for low-income women and their families. In practice, SEHW employed predominantly Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant women in manufacturing work to fulfill its mission. In this anti-immigration climate, exemplified in the recent passage of Senate Bill 1070 in the state of Arizona that aims to identify, prosecute, and deport undocumented immigrants; SEHW as a NPO considered immigration-related issues to be controversial and chose to take the “safe” route of emphasizing serving low-income women in their public materials and discourses. As Carla stated, “Social enterprise serving women, low-income women, it’s like that’s all very safe. You know there is no political, politicization that we say possible.” Also, the border conflicts between the United States and Mexico coupled with the criminalization of Mexican immigrants, in particular, further renders any associations with Mexican immigrants to be highly political and thus problematic for businesses. However, as a NPO that chose to employ and serve predominantly low-income Mexican



immigrant women, for SEHW to truly empower those women it should address the unique challenges facing immigrant families.

SEHW's trying to achieve profitability through its manufacturing business in a global context where all equivalent industries have gone offshore conditioned its employees to rely and depend on SEHW. Though the production employees in SEHW were considered highly skilled, there is a limited market and low transferability for their skills. Given this context, the production employees in SEHW really had limited opportunities for climbing up the socioeconomic ladder. Thus, this approach can act to create dependency and reinforce and reproduce lower class positioning for these immigrant women.

By attributing the immigrant base of SEHW as accidental or unintentional, SEHW denies and erases the alienation and subjugation of Mexican immigrants in the United States. The Evading the cultural affiliations of the women employed raises questions and thus reproduces broader negative stereotypes about Mexicans. Sr. Brooks considered the work of SEHW to "be making up for" what the production employees lacked in their Mexican culture. She said:

I think culture has a lot to do with who you are and the work ethics. And the other thing that they [SEHW] taught them [the production employees] has made them better at who they are. And what they are lacking in culture they give it to them through education and some of the stuff that they are getting. I think to be competitive is not a Mexican thing, but you need to be somewhat competitive to succeed.

These comments reproduce the unfair treatment of and cultural racism toward Mexican immigrants. Bobo and Smith (1998) argue that racism has taken a cultural turn toward laissez-faire racism that blames the racialized others for their own socioeconomic

victimization as a result of their cultural backwardness. These comments may illustrate this trend.

### *Ideologies about Group Relations*

Underlying the discourses about group relations in SEHW is the ideology of abstract liberalism that masks and silences contradictory views and voices. For instance, scholars such as Bonilla-Silva (2006) and Gullestad (2004) discuss the way which liberalism's principles in this post-Civil Rights era such as "equal opportunities" and "individual choice" underscore a moral shift and function to render racism invisible in the popular consciousness and imagination. Within SEHW, the ideology of abstract liberalism took the form of an unquestioned belief claim that stated "Good relationships overcome difference." Competing discourses about the challenges and difficulties in relating across different cultural identities and group positions were silenced and rendered invisible in favor of relationships as easy and positive. This ideological emphasis minimizing differences functioned to naturalize and reproduce identity-based status hierarchies as well, in that, more often than not, higher status individuals benefited most from this belief.

*Good Relationships Overcome Difference:* As a NPO founded and led by a White woman for mostly Mexican immigrant women, this ideological belief of "difference is less important than good relationships" was dominant in SEHW. This was best captured in Sandra's statement that "We live in a world of others. It's not good to live in a world of just people exactly like you." In SEHW, this ideological belief claim of "differences can 'disappear' with good relationships" was supported and reinforced by the belief about relationships in SEHW that stated "we all get along." The ideological emphasis on good

relationships is best illustrated in Lani's comment: "I think we all get along great, I really do...I think we all get along real well. I really do." Also, getting along was discursively constructed as necessary for SEHW because good relationships contributed to a good work environment, which in turn helped to increase productivity. Greta explained:

Since I am a supervisor now, I try to make sure that the employees have a good relationship, and I try to have a good relationship with them so they can have a good work environment... I believe that in any job if there is a good relationship at work, the production is higher.

Since differences were present and had to be recognized in SEHW, "respect" was proposed as the strategy to handle differences. Using respect in relating across lines of differences is best exemplified in Kaya's comment below.

I think one of relating to people is with respect, regardless of whether you are the Executive Director or you are the newest person who has just been hired to do sewing. I think respect and dignity are really, really important. And I think Sandra does a great job of trying to always emphasize that. As an example, I've never really seen her not do that. I think she is always considering what other people are thinking and feeling and what's the best way to talk to them.

Collectively, this ideological belief claim of getting along with the strategy of treating differences with respect was dominant.

Along with respect, there was some recognition of certain privileges associated with race, class, or educational backgrounds among the staff, board members, and volunteers, in relation to the production employees who were Spanish-speaking, low-income, Mexican immigrant women. For example, Carla remarked on Sandra's awareness of her privilege and status in SEHW.

Sandra is I think definitely coming from a place of wanting to serve but also feeling a responsibility to serve based on the privilege, the status, she holds within the organization. On the one hand I think that's true or valid and then in other way I think she is minimizing the incredible work and dedication she's putting in all these years.

However, there was limited discourse about how the levels of privilege might function or influence the work of SEHW. As well, the role of privilege was downplayed in favor of “work and dedication,” which reinforces the idea that differences don’t matter. Also, group relations as enabled and constrained by this ideological belief had implications and consequences for the work of SEHW. For example, Peggy McIntosh (1997) argues that privilege can function to “give license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant, and destructive” (p. 295). In the context of SEHW’s work serving predominantly immigrant women, Alicia described an example of ignorance among community members about immigrant issues as evidenced in the use of offensive language towards immigrants. Her example almost excuses offensive language because “people don’t know.”

You know in a lot of community interaction, there is a lot of ignorance about the immigrant community among non-immigrants. So you hear a lot of language that is potentially offensive around aliens, illegals, and just a lot of assumptions because people don’t know things.

Minimizing differences functioned to exclude competing views such as disagreement is useful or the inevitability and necessity of managing conflict productively. For example, while the strategy of respecting difference may foster a culture of civility, respect is not sufficient to expose and dismantle the reproductions of social systems such as racism, sexism, and classism. Without recognizing the intersecting politics of different cultural identities and group positions in SEHW, this ideological belief runs the danger of perpetrating race-, class-, and/or education-based domination.

*Competing Discourses of Acknowledging Challenges in Relating across Lines of Differences:* The ideological belief of getting along was contradicted by another stream of discourses about racial politics. In SEHW, this discourse was articulated mostly by two staff members, Alicia, and Lucia, who described the contradictory social worlds of

Whites and people of color, and between the staff and the production employees. As women of color, university/college graduates and members of the staff, Alicia and Lucia seemed to occupy positions as bridges between board members and production women. They named racial differences and brought issues to the attention of other staff and board members. Their positions functioned as what John Paul Lederach (2008) calls “middle-range actors” who are connected to and have the trust of both top-level and grassroots actors and are key voices in his peacebuilding framework. Thus, they were able to both advocate for the production women and align with higher status staff and board members to have their views heard.

For example, in terms of racial politics, Alicia named and commented on the racial dynamics where people of color were discouraged to speak up or represent themselves. She said:

It’s interesting because there are a lot of people who feel very militant about, you know, different people of color being able to represent their own voice and building leadership and being on the table, speaking on their own behalf, and not being represented by someone who has intrinsically a lot more power because of the fact that they are White.

Although the mission of SEHW centers on at least implicit recognition of the intersections between race, class, and gender; recognizing the racial politics concerning low-income Mexican immigrant women as they negotiated their identity positions, seldom surfaced in the interviews. As mentioned earlier, roles in SEHW were racialized; Sandra, a White woman of upper/middle class standing, represented SEHW to the business world, whereas Alicia, a Colombiana Americana woman, represented SEHW in the local Hispanic communities. This arrangement raises the question if SEHW would

have been as accomplished in both the business world and the local communities if Sandra and Alicia had reversed their roles.

Another stream of discourses that challenged the staff's status positions and dominance is illustrated by the following. Lucia talked about how the production women sometimes resisted the decisions made by the staff by collaborating with each other not to meet their production goals. She explained:

In terms of like the production goals, they [the employees] can, they talk to each other and they go, 'Oh, don't do that much, because then they're going to ask for more.' So then it could be negative. But they can also, 'Oh we have to do this, because we don't have a lot of money.'

Particularly in the context facing layoffs, Lucia commented that she had seen the production employees intentionally failing to make their production goals so that they could have another day's work without thinking about the organizational consequences of not meeting deadlines for SEHW. Apparently these views were not shared with the staff. Perhaps the overemphasis on getting along deterred the production women from openly questioning and challenging decisions made by the staff. Instead, the production women coped with these top-down decisions by collaborating with each other. The ideological belief in getting along may have discouraged cross-status, bottom-up communication.

Lucia also remarked on a relational dynamic and struggle among the production women that seldom surfaced in dominant organizational discourses. Whereas staff like Sandra felt the pressure to push for program participation, Lucia explained that some production women resisted participating in programs such as GED and the citizenship test for fear of lagging behind and/or not passing the exams. She said:

Let's say like the GED. If they [production women] are gonna take the exam, then one person asks the other, 'Did you pass it? I passed it.' And then if you don't pass it, you don't want to tell anyone, but everybody wants to know, and so then

it's almost like if you don't pass it, everybody's like, 'Oh, she didn't pass it.' It makes it hard to come to work but also it makes it hard to be thinking about signing up for the GED, because 'What if I don't pass it!'

Also, the need to get along in a family-like environment could become pressure for the production women to keep up but not speak up about concerns or other demands. In practice, this pressure could have both positive and negative consequences for SEHW.

This ideological belief of getting along promotes the strategy of minimizing differences, denies the inherent status politics of differences, and limits the exploration of intersecting identity politics in SEHW. Though most staff, volunteers, and board members described divergent cultural identities between themselves and the production women in their interviews, they focused mostly on positive aspects like being a family and how some individuals with higher status could bring in resources. Sandra's comment below exemplifies positive frame for her status as beneficial for SEHW.

It has been very clear that I do certain things here and I have access to people. I am going to go and talk to, and Lani is like, 'Oh, Sandra can go and talk to anybody.' And I will. I will do anything I can, use any of my resources and anything for SEHW and they benefit because I have access to more resources.

Additionally, in the context of talking about the immigrant center led by Alicia, Sarah stressed that, instead of complaining about discrimination, the production women should appreciate the opportunities they were afforded in the United States and in SEHW. She said:

I think if you want to feel sorry for yourself, like 'Poor us! We are discriminated.' Well, I am not personally sure about that. I am, no, of course there are instances that this happens. But there is medical care, our wonderful school system, our roads and you usually get a job.

In the context of SEHW being a nonprofit business for marginalized groups such as Mexican immigrant women, the ideological belief rooted in abstract liberalism (i.e., in

this case a liberal notion of the United States as “the land of opportunities”) might function to blame the victims for not working hard enough to overcome their victimization and further subjugate the victims.

Higher status individuals also described the importance of maintaining control of situations. Sandra believed that she ought to stay calm and should never “freak out” in order to hold SEHW together. Sandra explained:

One thing that I learned is that I need to stay calm no matter what is going on, because if I am not calm, everybody freaks out. So I come in here and people freak out. And I am just like, ‘Okay, how are we gonna do this? And this is what we are gonna do and this is what we are gonna try.’ Then people calm down and go do it. If I freak out, we are dead. It’s true. It’s really true. So I learned that this year a lot during the layoffs and during everything.

To the contrary, several of the production women commented that they wished Sandra could unload her burdens on them and tell them what was happening. Greta explained:

I think it’s very important that the production workers and us [supervisors] should know about some things that are happening, because Sandra, the administrative chief, carries a lot of those things on her shoulders and I think it’s very important that we as workers know what is going on, so that we can carry the load together. And she is not carrying everything on her back by herself. Even though she’s a person with a lot of faith and she is always saying, ‘Everything is going to be fine. Everything is going to be fine.’ I think it’s something that everybody should know.

The juxtaposition of both comments suggested limited cross-status communication in SEHW functioned to reproduce the status hierarchies for staff and production women in SEHW.

Overall, ideological beliefs rooted in abstract liberalism and equal opportunities to succeed minimized differences and disagreement, discouraged more open and transparent communications, and ultimately functioned to reproduce status hierarchies. Without more



bridges across status positions, women across the three status groups became more deeply entrenched in their positions and assumptions about one another.

***Ideologies, Power Relations, and Reproduction of Social Order***

By juxtaposing the discursively produced ideological beliefs that enabled and constrained the work of SEHW, cultural identity positions, and status relationship negotiation, I consider the ideologies and larger social order that was reproduced. In particular, I examine the broader social order reflected in the power relations and power interests that were sustained by the discursively produced ideologies and institutional practices in SEHW. This is consistent with Mumby's (1988, 2000) view that dominant power interests are served by discursively structured organizational realities and power relations are evident in the social relationships among individuals and groups.

Within SEHW, ideologies of individual meritocracy and abstract liberalism functioned to serve the power interests of higher status individuals, in particular the few upper/middle class White women. Both discursively produced ideologies sustained bureaucratic decision-making processes that, for example, privileged a manufacturing business model offering limited job transferability for the production employees who were 90-95% Mexican immigrant women. Similarly, unequal information sharing norms were sustained and functioned to reproduce unequal power relations across the status groups along racial and socioeconomic lines. At the same time, organizational practices, such as having more White women in the upper management level and on the board, also reinforced these relations. Most board members were White, from higher class status, and more likely to have access to funders. Also, directors and managers received higher salary compensations than production employees. When combined, such practices largely

sustained social stratifications based on race, class, and educational levels and reproduced the unequal power relations between upper/middle class White women and low-income Mexican immigrant women, with the exception of two Mexican women who were promoted to be managers.

In relation to the context of the nonprofit sector, the ideology and work of SEHW reproduced gender stereotypes and to a certain extent perpetuated a patriarchal family system. The focus on sewing, an activity that reflects roots in “sweatshop” manufacturing settings, and is often associated with culturally assigned feminine qualities, perpetuated and reproduced gender stereotypes about women’s skills and capabilities. The overall autocratic and top-down decision-making and information-sharing processes reinforced a patriarchal family system where the elders make policy and get the most recognition. In the case of the SEHW, the position of the elder was occupied by Sandra, an upper/middle class White woman. Proportionally, there were more White women, especially of upper/middle class status, occupying higher organizational positions and having decision-making roles.

In relation to the society at large, SEHW’s camouflaged public identity as a NPO for low-income women evidenced race-evasiveness, or what Ruth Frankenburg (1993) terms “color evasion” that represses or denies the differences that race makes (p. 156), which could function to reproduce color-blindness and sustain white supremacy. Referring to low-income women downplays, if not erases, the reality of racism, and silences the voices of women of color such as Mexican immigrants in the United States.

Overall, the work of SEHW does seem to contribute to the growth and development of its Mexican immigrant women employees at least in the short term. However, in terms of empowerment at the social scale, its effectiveness seemed limited.

## CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

### Review of the Study

In this dissertation, I address communication in intercultural relationships in the context of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) with attention to the role of intersecting cultural identity positions and status relationships. Specifically, I examined how members across three status positions in two social justice-oriented NPOs constructed the identity of the NPO and negotiated their cultural identities and relationships. Also, I interrogated the reproduction of ideologies and broader social order. Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) and Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW) are both social justice-oriented NPOs with explicit goals of improving the lives of an underserved or marginalized sectors of the population (i.e., underserved Asian crime victims for CPA and low-income Spanish-speaking immigrant women for SEHW). Four questions guided my research: (a) What do interview discourses from members of three status groups (i.e., staff, board of directors/volunteers/interns, and women served) within each of the two NPOs and organizational documents reveal about each NPO's work and identity? (b) What do interview responses and organizational documents reveal about intersecting cultural identity positions? (c) What do interview responses and organizational documents demonstrate with regard to relational dialectical tensions and the negotiation of status hierarchies? (d) What are the ideological implications of interview discourses and organizational documents related to productivity, group relations, and the broader social order?

I locate myself as a researcher with an overarching agenda of promoting socially responsible communication in intercultural relationships that feature fairness and equality

while recognizing structural constraints. From my previous experiences researching intercultural friendships (Y.-W. Chen, 2006a, 2006b, 2009; Y.-W. Chen & Nakazawa, 2009), I have learned that challenges and opportunities facing intercultural relationships are not just personal but also relational, contextual, political, and historical. To meet my overarching goals, my previous experiences indicate that I should first *understand* how individuals enact and experience their intercultural relationships and then *interrogate* the ways in which their realities are conditioned by contextual and structural forces.

Given my objectives to both understand and critique contextually structured intersecting cultural identities and relationship negotiation, I integrated interpretive and critical orientations to knowledge building and performed critical discourse analysis of interview discourses and available organizational documents. I recognized culture as a constantly contested site of struggle and socially constructed group affiliations. In the interview discourses and texts, members of different status groups in both NPOs constructed, contested, and negotiated their cultural identities and status positions in relation to unequal social systems such as racism, classism, and sexism.

I relied on theoretical and conceptual foundations of cultural identities, intersecting standpoints, and relational dialectics to answer my research questions. Cultural identity theory (CIT) (Collier, 1998, 2005b) provided a useful framework to understand cultural identities as discursively constituted locations of being, speaking and acting that are intersecting and constantly changing. I applied different properties and processes associated with cultural identity enactment such as avowal, ascription, and salience in my interpretations. Standpoint theory (Hartsock, 1997), or standpoint epistemology (Collins, 1997, 2000), provided me with the lens to examine the positioning

and orientations of different groups of women and men in their own intersecting social positions. Relational dialectics theory (Baxter, 1988, 1990; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008) provided me with a lens to understand the contradictory and paradoxical pushes and pulls that constituted the meaning-making processes in relationships among those affiliated with the two chosen NPOs.

I employed a method of critical discourse analysis that is consistent with an integrated critical/interpretive theoretical perspective. Critical discourse analysis was useful since it lends itself to analyzing different types and forms of discourse, including interviews and public texts. Also, it attends to the relations between discourse, ideology, and power. I drew on elements of both van Dijk's (1998) social-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis and Fairclough's (2001) five-step model to guide my analysis. I interpreted discursive themes and ideologies based on central constructs using CDA in ways generally consistent with van Dijk (1998) and as applied by Collier (2005a, 2009).

My data collection was guided by a case study approach that is commonly employed in researching NPOs (McNabb, 2008). Two cases were selected based on their uniqueness and similarities as social justice-oriented NPOs. Specifically, I collected three forms of data: (a) public texts and discourses featuring both archival and public materials regarding the two chosen nonprofit cases, (b) participant observations through volunteering at both NPOs, and (c) qualitative in-depth interviews with members of three different status groups in each NPO. Interview discourses were my primary data informed by organizational documents and participant observations for answering my proposed research questions. In the following section, I synthesize the findings from my two case studies.

### **Summary Discussion: Center of Peace for Asians**

Founded in August 2006, Center of Peace for Asians (CPA) is a burgeoning NPO that aims to provide comprehensive and integrated services to Asians and Asian immigrants, especially underserved Asians such as crime victims of domestic violence. CPA is one of the few, if not the only, Asian-centered agency in a minority majority state where the number of Asians/Asian Americans is less than the national average. Funded by a combination of government agencies, charitable organizations, and private donations, CPA is a relatively new NPO that is in the process of defining itself, stabilizing its staff, building a steady volunteer base, gaining visibility in the communities, and trying to serve its clients' best interests.

#### ***Status-specific Constructions of Organizational Identity***

Members of the different status groups experienced CPA from their particular standpoints and, not surprisingly, evidenced different conceptions of the same organization. Interviews across status groups and organizational documents revealed that CPA was viewed as predominantly a service-providing agency for Asians, especially underserved Asian women. Within each status group, there were unique themes that emerged. Participating staff said that CPA provided services that were client-based and CPA was considered an advocacy organization that aimed to empower its clients. Participants in the volunteer status group indicated that CPA was an organization in its infancy trying to help Asians in need. Participating clients revealed that CPA offered dependable care and free services to help people overcome their difficulties.

Enabled and constrained by their status positions both within CPA and beyond, participants, therefore, had divergent views of CPA as a NPO. The staff members, who

were all counselors and/or social workers, shared strong intentions to serve the clients' best interests in ways that enabled clients to problem solve and become independent. The volunteers, interns, and board members, who, in some ways, were under-utilized, expressed a general and abstract view of CPA. The clients, who relied on the services that CPA provided, constructed CPA and valued most its dependability and affordability as an organization. The similarities and differences across the constructions suggested a position-based status hierarchy in CPA since positions of each status group implicated access to resources and authority to make decisions with CPA. All voices described CPA as a short-term oriented, reactive organization because of the descriptions of client-centered help, services, and counseling. Although CPA provided needed services for some Asians whose needs otherwise might not have been met, the ways the services were provided, and over-reliance on crisis counseling seemed to foster unintended dependence.

### ***Contextually Contingent Intersecting Cultural Identity Positions***

Participants from CPA negotiated their intersecting cultural identity positions in ways that were enabled and constrained by the work of CPA and the status locations from which they spoke. In the context of CPA's focus on serving "Asians" as defined by a geographic concept of Asia, participants, who were mostly first-generation immigrants, had to confront inter-Asian tensions and negotiate their ethnic/national identities in relation to their Asian-ness. In particular, most participants in the volunteer group constructed a negative valance for CPA's Asian-ness as overly broad. The contradiction between the CPA's public discourse of inclusion of all Asians, and CPA's practice of serving particular Asian ethnic/national groups, raises questions and concerns with using



the label *Asian* that grew out of colonial histories and is rooted in colonized consciousness.

With limited recognition of multiple cultural identities with corresponding differential histories, most participants avowed their identities and described others' identities in ways that reinforced speakers' status positions, especially those with higher status, such as staff and volunteers. The responses of many of the staff and members of the volunteer group showed the privileging of their organizational roles and higher education levels, which functioned to reinforce and reproduce their legitimacy and capability to access resources, exert control, and/or make decisions. In contrast, the women clients were described by some staff as vulnerable and needing to be protected, rather than survivors of contextually enabled patriarchy and domestic abuse. Moreover, there were instances of ascriptions that contradicted avowals, and avowals that were not recognized, which had implications for CPA's work. For instance, the staff's ascriptions and assumptions of the clients' needs, group identities, and levels of agency dictated the services that were prioritized. Overall, very few participants' responses described or acknowledged the ways in which multiple cultural identities intersected and functioned in CPA. In turn, the lack of contesting of cultural identity ascriptions that were overgeneralizations, such as assumptions of clients being limited in their abilities to give input into services or programs, functioned to sustain a status hierarchy in CPA and limit CPA's productivity to empower the marginalized women clients.

### ***Dialectical Tensions and Negotiating Status Hierarchy***

Two tensions, among others, arose from the interview discourses that characterized relationship negotiation in CPA: (a) similarity and/or difference, and (b)

dependence and/or independence. In interview discourses, many participants privileged similarities and only recognized differences associated with differential access and resources (e.g., English language competency). Within cross-status relationships that involved power differentials, especially those between staff and clients, staff desired to maintain a professional stance that supported clients to become independent, but the clients preferred relating as family members on whom they could depend. Given such a relational climate, four specific status positions functioned as sources of dominance based on discourses of marginalization: (a) organizational roles, (b) counselors, (c) having higher educational levels, and (d) being female. Ultimately, the outcomes of the ways in which relationships and status hierarchies were negotiated in CPA included the privileging of relational harmony and the naturalizing of status hierarchies that functioned to dilute tensions and silence non-confirming voices.

### ***Discourse, Ideology, and Reproduction of Power Relations***

When examining ideologies that were embedded in and (re)produced in interview discourses and organizational documents, I uncovered several ideological beliefs that had implications for CPA's productivity and group relations, and reinforced the broader social order. Underlying the discourses about CPA's productivity was the ideological belief that "*Individual crisis counseling is our priority.*" This ideological belief impacted the definition of productivity in CPA and limited its attention to treatment of women as victims, minimized recognition of the influence of immigration policies, and ignored the global context of interracial abusive marriages between White males and Asian females. These limitations ensured that CPA attended to primarily individualistic approaches of serving its clients and broad community. Underlying the discourses of group relations

were three ideological beliefs that enabled and constrained intercultural relationship negotiation in CPA: (a) “*As Asians, we should be a unified group*”; (b) “*Be yourself; be an individual*”; and (c) “*We must protect Asians’ model minority image.*” Implicated in the ideological beliefs were calls for diluting Asian identities and assimilation. By not examining and exposing the inequality produced by social systems of whiteness and patriarchy, the work of CPA and the beliefs about group relations reproduced white supremacy and the patriarchal system that continued to structure and subjugate the lives of the Asian women clients.

### **Summary Discussion: Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women**

Social Enterprise for Hispanic Women (SEHW) is an established nonprofit business that has been featured in local, state, and national media as an innovative social enterprise. Founded in 1994 in one of the poorest U.S. states with disproportionate poverty among women and children, SEHW aims to create intergenerational wealth for low-income women and has employed primarily low-income Hispanic, Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant women. SEHW’s revenue comes from both grants and manufacturing contracts. As a NPO striving to become a self-sufficient nonprofit business, the current global economic recession challenged SEHW to reexamine its identity as a manufacturing/outsourcing nonprofit business. Also, the persistent anti-immigration climate, especially targeting Hispanics, challenged SEHW to reconsider its work of empowering its employees who are 90-95% first-generation Mexican immigrant women.

### *Status-specific Constructions of Organizational Identity*

Grounded in their divergent standpoints in SEHW, members of different status groups constructed somewhat different views of SEHW and had somewhat different understandings of SEHW. Since SEHW is an established NPO that has been in existence for 15 years, all participants' discourses, on the surface, seemed to reflect similar understandings about the uniqueness and duality of SEHW's mission as a social enterprise that aimed to empower low-income women. Nonetheless, their particular choices of words constructed somewhat different identities of SEHW as related to their status positions. Within the responses from each status group, there were unique themes that emerged. The participating staff emphasized the two competing sides of SEHW (i.e., production business and social programs) and the employment of immigrant women with young children. The interviewed board members and volunteers stressed the progressiveness of SEHW and the strong staff and characterized the production employees as "profile employees" who were Mexican immigrant women. The participating production employees highlighted the onsite daycare and flexibility to attend to their kids, do sewing-based work, and have opportunities for personal development.

Across the status-specific constructions of SEHW, the similarities and differences suggest several conclusions. First, the business side of SEHW was privileged and dominant, whereas mission-driven programs were secondary. Second, contradictions and contestations arose around SEHW's employee base of first-generation Mexican immigrant women. Third, Sandra, a White woman with upper/middle class status, was attributed to be a critical figure in founding and sustaining SEHW.

Overall, description of the work of SEHW reflected intersections of class, gender, and race; examples included references to low-income women, Spanish-speaking low-income women, immigrant women with young children, or newly arrived Mexican immigrant women. The organizational strategies and tactics SEHW employed to navigate the intersecting identity politics had been successful enough to sustain the NPO for 15 years. While it is hard to speculate if SEHW could have been more or less successful given different strategies, the choices SEHW made, however, implicate and reflect contextual constraints and forces.

### ***Contextually Contingent Intersecting Cultural Identity Positions***

Participants from SEHW negotiated their intersecting cultural identity positions in ways that were enabled and constrained by the context of SEHW, the status locations from which they spoke, and the broader context of debates about immigration and the economic downturn. The inconsistency between SEHW's work as reflected in public discourses (i.e., an agency for low-income women) and reflected in actual practices and interview discourses (i.e., an agency employing primarily Mexican immigrant women), showed that the labels of *low income* and *Mexican immigrants* were contested. While the label *low income* historically had been instrumental for SEHW to obtain grants, most production women's interviews showed that they struggled with being described as low income, which to them connoted a sense of nothingness. Also, many of the production women, as well as Mexican immigrant staff, such as Fonda, described having to confront negative ascriptions and stereotypes about Mexicans and Mexican culture in their experiences of working in SEHW and living in the U.S. Southwest.

Despite the evidence of awareness of intersecting multiple cultural identities in some responses from higher-status individuals, most participants avowed their identities and described others' identities in generalized ways that perpetuated a clear status hierarchy in SEHW. Higher-status individuals such as staff, board members, and volunteers avowed their identities and described production employees' identities in ways that not only normalized their higher status in SEHW but also implicated lower status levels for the employees (i.e., emphasizing their organizational roles, privileging points of connections, and indicating that production women couldn't understand or appreciate some concepts like the value of a higher status educational degree). In contrast, production women interviewed avowed their identities in ways that privileged similarities sometimes with staff based on shared identities as women/mothers, and sometimes with each other, but overall denied differences. This sustained the status hierarchy in SEHW. Further, the instances of ascriptions of Hispanic or low income that contradicted avowals around Mexican/Latino/Spanish-speaking could reinforce a sense of ambivalence and diaspora that Abalos (2007) argues underlies the identity of Mexican and Latino communities. Overall, the ways participants across status groups negotiated their intersecting cultural identities posed challenges to empowering the production women, because the avowals and ascriptions that emerged reinforced the status hierarchy in ways that also minimized their levels of agency.

### ***Dialectical Tensions and Negotiating Status Hierarchy***

Two tensions arose from the interview discourses that characterized relationship negotiation in SEHW: (a) relating as a family vs. functioning as managers and workers, and (b) equality vs. hierarchy (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). In SEHW, most

participants privileged relating as a family and equality over hierarchy that gave rise to a dominant family environment. Given such a family environment, five status positions were sources of dominance based on discourses of marginalization: (a) being women/mothers, (b) languages, (c) manager roles, (d) seniority in SEHW, and (e) business backgrounds/skills. Ultimately, the ways in which relationship and status hierarchy were negotiated in SEHW reinforced white supremacy, the benefits of higher socio-economic status, and patriarchy, and such positions and relationships might function to exclude outsiders and/or those positioned as minority groups.

### ***Discourse, Ideology, and Reproduction of Power Relations***

When examining ideologies that were embedded in and (re)produced in interview discourses and organizational documents, I uncovered certain ideological beliefs that had implications for SEHW's productivity and group relations, and reinforced the broader social order. Underlying the discourses about SEHW's work were the ideological beliefs of "*SEHW needs to be profitable.*" This ideological belief functioned to naturalize competing discourses about the work of SEHW (e.g., production vs. programs) and kept the Mexican immigrant women dependent on SEHW. A further set of competing discourses involved the public focus on low income women versus the practice in SEHW serving low-income Mexican immigrant women. The valorizing of profit and camouflaging of the Mexican immigrant status of the production women culminated in producing the lower status of the Mexican immigrant women. Underlying the discourses of group relations was the ideological belief of "*Good relationships overcome difference.*" Discursively, such an ideology functioned to render invisible a competing discourse that recognized how standpoints based on race, sex, class, as well as cultural

identities as immigrant and citizen, impact differential experiences and access to resources. The latter competing discourse, that difference matters and should be explicitly addressed, was also evident from two members of the staff. These competing discourses showed that difference was still somewhat contested, though most often minimized in the interviews. In summary, the overemphasis on good relationships excluded the inevitability and necessity of managing conflict productively. By not examining the biases, privileges, and hidden assumptions that higher-status staff and board members brought into SEHW, the work of SEHW ran the danger of serving the power interests of upper/middle class White women, reproducing gender stereotypes as well as white supremacy.

### **Identity Politics in Two Identity-Based Nonprofit Organizations**

Both of my research sites exemplified organized efforts to call attention to, advocate for, and empower women who are marginalized and underserved by unequal social systems in the United States. Though not explicit in the interview discourses or organizational materials, the work of the NPOs, trying to enable women (and men) to succeed in the face of wider social systems, functioned implicitly to reproduce classism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. Both NPOs I studied provided the women (and men) they served opportunities for social mobility and impacted their lives in profound ways, but the strategies they employed and their relationships with one another were not uninfluenced by forces of the unequal social systems they intended to remedy. In the following section, I discuss implications for understanding identity politics and systems of social stratification common across and unique to the two NPOs.



### ***RQ1 Status-specific Constructions of Each Organization's Work and Identity***

When looking across the status-specific constructions of each organization's work and identity in CPA and SEHW, several interpretations can be postulated. First, organizational status positions, to a certain extent, determined different views of and experiences within each NPO. Specifically, organizational status positions intersected with class, gender, race, and educational levels, and functioned as differential social locations or standpoints in structuring members' relationships and material realities. In both NPOs studied, members in higher status positions such as staff and board members were from higher educational brackets and of higher socioeconomic status. Also, more board members in SEHW were White women than Hispanic/Latina women. In practice, staff in both NPOs emerged as the primary ruling group that controlled most decisions and structured most relations. Though nonprofit board of directors are trusted with legal and moral obligations of governance (Hopkins, 2003), the CPA board controlled certain decisions (e.g., identifying an executive director ) and left daily operations to the staff, whereas the SEHW board functioned more to support than govern the work of SEHW. Overall, across status groups, the women and men in both CPA and SEHW shared both common and divergent standpoints based on their shared and different material experiences that shaped their knowledge of the NPO. Also, the standpoint perspective enabled me to treat the women served by both NPOs as "legitimated agents of knowledge" and brought out their perspectives that otherwise might not have been visible (Collins, 2000, p. 266).

Second, the ways members of CPA and SEHW negotiated their organizations' identity reflected a politics of inclusivity that functioned to render invisible exclusionary

practices. Both CPA and SEHW chose a broad, intentionally inclusive label for their organizational identity, but in practice they both served a particular group within the label they utilized in public discourse. Though for “all Asians,” CPA served mostly Eastern/Southeastern Asians such as Vietnamese, Chinese, and Indian women. Though for all “low-income women,” SEHW served mostly low-income Mexican immigrant women. Despite their public discourses, not all Asians could be equally served by CPA and not all low-income women could be equally served by SEHW. This raises concerns if the public discourses about serving the more general, supposedly inclusive, group might function as an exclusionary practice because underrepresented groups within the overarching label cannot be served, though the organizational mission and materials indicated that they should be. As well the public labels function to dilute difference and fail to reflect the diversification among Asians and low-income women.

At the strategic level, CPA’s claiming its all Asian-ness and SEHW’s reluctance to reflect its dominant Mexican immigrant employee base implicate intricate racial politics. CPA was founded by and directed by higher status Asian women and men whose positions and standpoints reflect challenges of using their resources to enable women served to move out of their marginalized positions and increase their options for living sustainable lives. SEHW was initiated and spearheaded by two White women, Sandra and Sr. Brooks, who acted and operated from positions of privilege and access based on their whiteness. Their positions enabled certain discursive resources—such as abstract liberalism and individual meritocracy. Based in part on Sandra’s standpoints and her influence, SEHW strategically diluted and used broader labels such as low-income women to represent the Mexican immigrant women it really served. The discourses

showed SEHW's resistance to use the more accurate and politically charged label of *Mexican immigrants*. Both CPA and SEHW could be classified as identity-based NPOs that originated in the decision of a group of people with a common identity to construct an organization for their mutual benefit (Reid, 1999). In the intersecting politics of race, class, and gender, the strategic choices that both NPOs made highlight that it was important for them to care about their public images given their funding needs and constraints. Each NPO's discourses reflected different mechanisms to evade race. SEHW claimed to work with women based on class levels and neglected their race, ethnicity, and immigrant status. CPA claimed to work with all Asians but failed to include programs and trainings on racism or histories of discrimination.

Third, the status-specific constructions of each NPO that emerged have implications for considering the work of the nonprofit sector to empower the marginalized in the context of a challenging funding environment. In this study, most staff and board members/volunteers constructed the NPOs' identities with a political edge such as "advocacy and empowerment" and "progressive," whereas most women served focused on the services and programs that benefited them (e.g., counseling in CPA and onsite daycare in SEHW) and used racially evasive identifiers to describe themselves such as "the unlucky people" and "all fighting women." Collins (2000) conceives of a politics of empowerment for U.S. Black women that involves both a change in consciousness and transformation of unjust social institutions. While the latter is not attainable from the actions of two NPOs alone, some commitment to political action or advocacy for legislative attention and funding to address Mexican immigrant women's needs or spousal abuse of Asian women may be warranted. The work and trajectory of

most identity-based NPOs are impacted by the “survival of the fittest” concept that requires NPOs to have a strong network of resources and stay informed about anticipated changes in the funding environment (Estrada, 1991). Given the structural constraints that NPOs like CPA and SEHW face in terms of access and resources, I am calling for CPA and SEHW to critically reflect on how their productivity and ability to meet their stated goals might be limited by not giving attention to histories and contextual structures as well as broadening their means of funding.

Lastly, organizational structures in terms of leadership and power relations were implicated in the discourses from interviews and organizational materials in both NPOs. Both CPA and SEHW were founded and led by women indicating that women’s access to upper-management roles in the nonprofit sector might be improving. Nearly a decade and a half ago, O’Neill (1994) synthesized a view that “the nonprofit sector may be an unwitting instrument by which the male power structure continues to exclude women from power” (p. 4), and Hernandez (1994) argued that “freedom and empowerment are virtually nonexistent for most minority women in nonprofits” (p. 263). The dominance of Asian women in CPA and women in SEHW depicted the reality of two groups of (educated) women gaining access, control, and influence in two NPOs in the U.S. Southwest. Also, leaders in both NPOs such as Kumico and Sandra expressed a desire to share and distribute power in some form, even though the work of both NPOs often demanded some form of autocratic decision-making. Consistent with Bordt’s (1997) analysis of the structure of women’s NPOs, both NPOs in this study struggled with the competing organizational forms of authoritarian management and collective decision-making. Ultimately, given the status groups and the status-specific experiences with each

NPO, the question remains how both NPOs can better plan for the kinds of changes they want to see in the lives of the women served while recognizing the context of intersecting unequal social systems and structures.

### ***RQ2 Contextually Contingent Intersecting Cultural Identity Positions***

When looking across the ways in which intersecting cultural identity positions were negotiated in both CPA and SEHW, I note several observations. First, respondents came to enact and negotiate their cultural identities in particular ways in particular interactional contexts (Collier, 1998). In this study, the most salient spaces where respondents contested and negotiated their cultural identities were in the work of each NPO. In the case of CPA, its focus on “Asians” triggered the participants to contest and negotiate what being Asian meant from each of their intersecting identity positions that were historical, contextual, and relational. For example, Megan speaking as a multiracial case worker with part Asian ancestry interrogated and questioned how CPA justified its clients’ Asian-ness. Identifying these tensions was important because the tension illustrated consequences such as exclusion of some Asian groups, and norms that denied hybridity in CPA. In the case of SEHW, production women identifying as Mexican and immigrants contested what *low income* meant. This observation suggests the possible utility of having members across status positions within each NPO come together and engage in dialogue about its work and mission, to recognize and/or bridge differences.

Second, as expected, respondents constructed and negotiated their cultural identities through both avowals and ascriptions. Also, implicated in the avowals and ascriptions that emerged were differential levels of agency to claim and/or conceal cultural identities. In the interviews, participants in higher status positions such as staff

and board members enacted and ascribed to others a wider range of cultural identities than the women served by the NPOs. The interviewed clients and production employees privileged common cultural identities and stressed points of connection to me, an outsider. In reflection, I speculate that their strategy of emphasizing commonality with me reflected what the women clients and employees often did in their relationships with the staff, interns, and/or volunteers, since I had more in common with the staff and volunteers than with them. The consequences of such emphasis on commonalities and masking of differences is to discourage voices of difference or critique, and to reproduce conformity.

Third, there were certain avowals and ascriptions that appeared to subjugate the positions of the women served and affected the potential of a NPOs' work. In CPA, the avowals that constructed the women served as needing to be protected, subjugated them in positions of dependence and removed their capability for independence, especially evidenced from the comments of the clients themselves who avowed their dependence. In SEHW, the ascriptions that indicated the production employees can't and "don't understand" subjugated them in positions of lower mental capability and removed their ability for higher level, complex thinking. Stopping short of providing background about immigration law or patriarchy and abuse limited clients' access to information and thus constrained their views of their own positions. Also, the contrasting comparisons of "us vs. them" functioned to essentialize all production employees and clients as unable to comprehend the workings of social systems.

Overall, avowal and ascription processes were useful in gaining insight into how intersecting cultural identities might be negotiated. In this study, the avowals and

ascriptions that emerged suggest that participants' comments demonstrated limited acknowledgment of the multivocality within cultural identity groups and that individuals simultaneously align with multiple cultural groups. Such limited recognition might constrain participants from claiming marginalized identity positions, and co-constructing hybrid identities within the NPOs. Also, the avowals and ascriptions that emerged suggest limited acknowledgment of cultural identities as formed and socially constructed in social, historical, and political contexts that implicate privilege and power relations. Even though some White women participants in SEHW talked about their recognition of their privilege as associated with their race and class, the comments did not address how their privilege might be implicated in structuring their relationships with others and affecting the work of SEHW. In CPA, individualistic avowals and ascriptions reflect assumptions about higher levels of individual agency for speakers as well as others. This is problematic. In CPA, for instance, the underserved Asian clients were often immigrants, crime victims, and held lower socioeconomic class positions; these locations constrained their options and levels of individual agency. In contrast, avowals and ascriptions such as "survivors of domestic violence" would have the potential to assist CPA's work. Ami, one of the interns, avowed her identity as a *survivor* of domestic violence and expressed her desires to help others in similar situations in the interview. However, as an intern in CPA, she shared that she had not avowed this identity to others in CPA.

### ***RQ3 Dialectical Tensions and Negotiating Status Hierarchy***

When looking across the relational dialectics that emerged and status positions that (re)produced hierarchy and dominance, several similarities and differences can be

noted. The dialectics identified were similarity/difference, independence/dependence hierarchy/equality, and relating as a family/functioning as managers and workers. First, the relational dialectics that emerged in both CPA and SEHW highlight contradictory tensions and competing discourses. Most members' responses in CPA and SEHW reflected one end of the dialectical range such as emphasizing similarity and family; this emphasis constituted a certain climate and dictated norms for relating within each NPO. In CPA, overemphasizing similarities functioned to privilege relational harmony, naturalize the status hierarchy, and silence non-confirmatory voices. In SEHW, the discourses, privileging "equality" and relating as a family, constituted a more informal climate and norms that functioned to reinforce solidarity among the SEHW "family" as well as among the production women, naturalize conflict as "minor" disagreements, and exclude outsiders/out-group members.

The ways in which dialectical tensions were negotiated were impacted by and reflected forces from social institutions and status hierarchies. In particular, differences in educational, economic, and linguistic social practices, educational levels, counselor training, business background/skills, and language proficiency, were used to position individuals into higher or lower status. As well, the dialectical tensions of independence/dependence and inclusion/exclusion also acted to foster dependence by clients and enabled discourses of family orientations and relational harmony. On the other hand, the NPOs' work to honor standpoints of "being female" and "being women/mothers," as well as members of "minority" cultural groups, can be viewed as feminist actions to dismantle patriarchal domination. When considering that the nonprofit sector might be gendered with a higher presence of females (Hernandez, 1994; O'Neill,



1994), who are working in part to overcome oppressions of various groups, it may be that the nonprofit sector is a viable site for feminists working for social change.

My treatment of both NPOs as *feminist* organizations allows me to discuss the findings in this study for engaged feminist actions. Similar to the challenges that Tripp (2006) identifies in transnational feminist initiatives and responses from the global North to assist in women's movements in parts of the world other than their own such as Afghanistan and Nigeria, engaged feminist actions in social justice-oriented nonprofits should address "*the manner in which* issues are treated and discussed," "*how* to best achieve agreed upon goals," and *how* to render support and assistance (p. 296, emphasis in original). The findings in this study suggests that engaged feminist actions in nonprofits necessitate considering ideological, historical, political, and economic contexts; understanding different positions taken by women with various intersecting identities; paying attention to status relationships; and taking input from the women served rather than assuming their needs.

#### ***RQ4 Discourse, Ideology, and Reproduction of Social Order***

Consistent with van Dijk's (1998) approach to ideology, I unpacked the underlying ideological beliefs in both CPA and SEHW that were embedded in the interview discourses and organizational documents. I concentrated on ideologies related to organizational productivity and group relations since these were most prominent in the discourses. The ideological beliefs implicated in both interviews and organizational documents reflected taken-for-granted, dominant, as well as competing, discourses. The ideologies took the form of implicated belief systems that acted to structure and organize organizational practices and group relations. As van Dijk argues, dominant groups

maintain their influence and positions in society by “complex systems of discourse and ideologies” that function to justify and neutralize their dominance (Van Dijk, 1998, pp. 166-167). When looking across the ideological beliefs that emerged and the reproduction of broader social order implicated in the work of CPA and SEHW, several conclusions can be advanced.

First, embedded in the ideological beliefs about organizational productivity in CPA (i.e., *Individual crisis counseling is our priority*) and in SEHW (i.e., *SEHW needs to be profitable*) is an overarching ideology of “*We are doing our best to address the women’s immediate needs.*” For CPA, the immediate needs were helping crime victims to cope with their imminent problems, whereas, for SEHW, the immediate needs were securing manufacturing work to generate necessary incomes. Though the staff members in CPA and SEHW seemed to be doing their best given the resources available, their attentions to the short-term immediate problems greatly limited the impact of their work. One participant described the short-term orientation as “putting on a bandage.” The issues that CPA and SEHW are dealing with such as domestic abuse and poverty are systematic, social, historical, institutional, and political. To effectively address those systemic issues requires organized efforts and long-term strategies that not only attend to the immediate problems but also address prevention and empowerment.

In particular, the field of the nonprofit sector that pertains to SEHW, *social enterprise*, faces additional challenges posed by broader U.S. ideological discourses of social entrepreneurship. Dees’ (2004) reading of principal writings and documents on social entrepreneurship reveals unrealistically heroic claims that depict social entrepreneurs as unsung heroes and alchemists with magical qualities. In SEHW, the

heroic discourse of a social entrepreneur was echoed in comments about Sandra as “a great White hope” and Sandra’s own comment about the women’s willingness to let her “lead them into the wild.” Also, Parkinson and Howorth’s (2008) critical discourse analysis of five phenomenological interviews with social entrepreneurs shows a prevailing rhetoric of social entrepreneurs becoming “more business-like,” reproducing long-standing tensions between local government and community, and a pathological construction of communities as “being in need of saving” (p. 302). In SEHW, the business-like rhetoric to save the low-income women was evidenced in the privileging of production over programs.

Second, the ideological beliefs about group relations in CPA related to Asian unification, being unique individuals, and protecting the model minority image, and in SEHW the belief that relationships overcome difference, reflected the reproduction of racialized status positionings and hierarchies. CPA’s discourses reproduce Asians’ status positions as model minorities in the United States, as lower than Whites but higher than other groups of color. The discourses from SEHW could be interpreted as evading U.S. racial politics on the one hand through references to low-income women, and on the other, through the choice to use the term *Hispanic*, a label imposed by the U.S. Census in the 1970s that arbitrarily and problematically defines Hispanics as an ethnic group regardless of race. Scholars have critiqued that the use of the term *Hispanic* functions to erase racial consciousness facing mixed-race Latino/as and ignores the racial nature of anti-Hispanic subordination in the United States (Alcoff, 1995; Lopez, 1998; Toro, 1998). Together the ideological beliefs about group relations reinforces the myth of racial purity and erases cultural differences among both Asians and Hispanics (Alcoff, 1995; Lopez,

1998; Oquendo, 1998), ignores the material conditions of intra-racial hierarchies based on the lightness and darkness of skin color (Bonilla-Silva, 2004), and overlooks the transformative possibilities of minority coalitions and alliances that can “maximize political preferences” of racial and ethnic groups through creating working relationships to advocate for agreed-upon political intentions and actions (Rich, 1996, p. 6). In CPA and SEHW, the apolitical ideologies about group relations can function as exclusionary practices to further subjugate and silence based on differences, because they reproduce and perpetuate status hierarchies. As Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2008) argues, the NPOs may benefit from recognizing “a politics of relation” (p.13); their intercultural and interracial relationships can be strengthened through understanding how they are structured by and embedded in differential power relations.

Third, across CPA and SEHW discourses, the systematic reproduction of the broader U.S. social structure of patriarchy and white supremacy became evident. Based on the findings in this study, *patriarchy* can be understood as unequal social structures that benefit and privilege higher status men and women through practices of autocratic decision-making and limited transparency that allow higher status groups to oppress, represent, and speak for/over others. This view of patriarchy is largely consistent with approaching patriarchy as systems, structures, and ideologies that position men as superior and women as inferior (e.g., Claire, 1998; Weedon, 1997). Patriarchal structures implicate unequal power relations in which lower-status women and men’s interests are subordinated to those in higher status positions. *White supremacy* can be understood as a location of privilege that links race with privilege and exists in institutions and social practices. White supremacy is interdependent with other forms of privilege such as class-

based and education-based positions and functions to reproduce and sustain higher levels of privilege for White and lighter skin men and women with higher socioeconomic class and educational levels. *Privilege*, in this study, is a location with access to resources, higher levels of influence, and higher status. Allan Johnson (2006) describes having privilege as being “allowed to move through your life without being marked in ways that identify you as an outsider” (p. 33). In this study, the privilege that higher status Asians in CPA and White women in SEHW experienced, were evidenced in their higher levels of influence over women served, access to resources, and decision-making abilities.

The organizational histories and choice of work in both CPA and SEHW showed some recognition of systems of sexism, racism, and classism facing underserved Asians and low-income (Hispanic) women. Without acknowledgement and knowledge of how unequal systems operate and are reproduced in their discourses, however, the practices and operations within CPA and SEHW seemed to reproduce sexism, racism, and classism in varying degrees. Token recognition of levels of privilege from some higher status individuals in either CPA or SEHW without engaging in problem solving about the consequences of privilege seems insufficient. Unrecognized differences in levels of privilege function to create standpoints that keep individuals, speaking and acting from locations of privilege, blind to the operation of unequal systems that benefit them more relative to others.

Ideologically, underlying the reproduction of race-, class-, education-based privilege and higher status for staff and board members in CPA and SHEW seems to be a unique form of liberalism that I term *benevolent liberalism*. This form of liberalism as benevolent is rooted in a strong sense of moral obligation prevalent in the nonprofit

sector to help people in need that Salamon (1997) describes as “*individual initiative in the public good*” (p. 7, emphasis in original). This benevolence can be traced to “a rich history that is rooted in centuries of religious influences and charitable practices” in the nonprofit sector (Block, 2004, p. 9). However, this benevolent liberalism functions ideologically to reproduce unequal systems of racism, sexism, and classism that drive the social issues CPA and SEHW attempt to address through their nonprofit work. The NPOs seek to help women in need, but, at the same time, seem to assume the women can overcome their circumstances through individual hard work, speaking English, and supporting their children. As a result, the women’s class status does not change.

The findings in this study also suggest the critical role that “middle-range actors,” who understand both the social worlds above and below, can play as *bridges* to name differences and bring up critical issues (Lederach, 2008). In this study, middle-range bridges like Alicia and Lucia illuminated some of the perspectives of lower status groups as well as identified and critiqued some of the issues to which higher status groups seemed ignorant or oblivious. Middle-range actors seem to be in the go-between positions of being able to both advocate for lower status groups and align with higher status groups. It may be that such staff members who demonstrate reflexivity about their own standpoints relative to others and can appreciate contextual structures are able to speak with authority to high status board members and also speak collaboratively with production women.

## **Theoretical and Methodological Implications**

### ***Cultural Identity Theory***

This study evidences the processes of cultural identity production and social construction, as evident in interview discourses and organizational documents. The texts showed that cultural identity negotiation is based in historical constructions, contextual forces, and relational dynamics within two identity-based NPOs. For instance, Alicia's response below to my question about perceptions of her cultural identities in SEHW illustrated the production of cultural identity as dynamic and multi-faceted depending on the situations, the interactants involved, the goals, group relations, etc.

That's a complicated one for me because I am not Mexicana you know. So I feel like Sandra and Sarah who are the Anglos, they are seeing me as the same as everybody else. I see myself as just, you know there are definitely some commonalities with language and with upbringing to some degree, there are a lot of similarities in Latina cultures, but I feel like a mystic at SEHW. I feel a little bit like a chameleon in that I can morph to fit into different groups and that can be very effective sometimes and sometimes it's not.

The significance of Alicia's being described as a Mexicana by two Anglo staff was contingent on the work of SEHW as primarily serving Mexican immigrant women, the anti-immigration politics targeting Hispanics particularly Mexicans, and the intergroup relationships within SEHW. Alicia claimed a position of "mystic" with an ability to "morph" to illustrate the intersections of her identities in SEHW. Thus, the results of this study show the value of approaching cultural identities as contingent, and as negotiations of structures and relational, social constructions.

In CPA, the contingent and multi-faced processes of cultural identity production and construction can be best illustrated by some of Megan's ascribed and avowed identities that were highly contested. When asked about how identity mattered in her work in CPA, Megan contested the negative valence of her avowed identity as an American.

It does because honestly I used to get pissed off, to be honest. Because I'm the only—well not now huh, well I guess I'm the only staff that's American, born in America. And I used to get really upset when another person—it wasn't the whole staff, but one other person was like, 'Oh, Americans are like this.' And I'm like, 'No they're not.' She was like, 'Americans don't report abuse.' And I'm like, 'Where did you get that from? Because I worked at CYFD and Americans are always reporting child abuse and neglect.'

In other contexts, Megan contested being described by different people as “part Japanese” and “White” and reported being “looked down on a little as a case worker.” Instead, Megan avowed “I don't consider myself White. I'm part White, but I'm not White...When you call me White, you're ignoring my grandmother and that really angers me because that's a piece of me...I'm mixed.” The contestations of Megan's cultural identities seem to be rooted in the colonial practices of racializing others based on phenotypes and skin color and U.S. multicultural identity politics.

In particular, the avowal and ascription processes are most useful to this study in understanding how intersecting cultural identities are constructed and negotiated. This study extends understandings of avowal and ascription processes by showing that avowal and ascription processes are not only contextually enabled and constrained in the work of organizations, but also avowals and ascriptions implicate levels of agency to recognize, communicate, and negotiate intersecting cultural identities. In this study, agency can be understood as the contextually enabled and constrained “...freedom and ability to choose and enact a range of actions” Collier (2005b, p. 244) that are both individually afforded and structurally determined. Thus, the discourses of intersecting cultural identities suggest that both NPOs neglect attention to structural constraints on women served and overemphasize women clients' abilities to become “empowered.”



Findings in this study suggest that status positions are related to the productions of avowed and ascribed cultural identities in that higher status individuals produced more avowals and ascriptions of cultural identities relative to lower status individuals. Also, discourses of cultural identities are structured, organized, and produced by ideologies about group identities that are social, historical, and political. For example, the contestations, avowals, and ascriptions of Asian-ness among participants in CPA were enabled and constrained by the ideologies of Asian unification and model minority image.

This study extends understanding of cultural avowals by showing that cultural avowals can also function to essentialize one's own groups. Previously, Collier (2005b) indicates that, in discourses about outgroups in general, "Cultural ascriptions about others often took the form of subjugating and essentializing views along with contrastive comparisons" (p. 251). In this study, cultural avowals were also found to take the form of essentializing one's own group such as "Women have to be protected" or "We are unlucky." Such views might be a reflection of patriarchy. These constructions of women's positions in society are problematic given the work of CPA that seeks to assist underserved Asian women to gain independence and the work of SEHW to assist Mexican immigrant women to attain socioeconomic mobility.

In terms of the salience property of cultural identity theory (Collier, 1998), this study uncovers a unique type of identity evident in discourses from first-generation Asian immigrant participants that I termed "ethnic/national identity." Respondents conflated their descriptions of nationality and ethnicity when talking about CPA's work with various Asian groups. They referred to Asian cultural identities based on ethnicity

connoting “a sense of belonging to their culture of origin” (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 51), and traditional concepts linking ethnicity and ancestry as well as claimed nationality as nationals or citizens of Japan, Vietnam, or China. This more complex orientation to identity combining nationality and ethnicity might relate to U.S. immigration law that does not require a naturalized U.S. citizen to choose between one citizenship or another; hence, a naturalized U.S. citizen may have dual nationality, which requires her/him to obey laws of both countries (U.S. Department of State, April 10, 2010). Also, the 2010 U.S. Census lists under the question about race various racially designated boxes that relate to nation states in Asia such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino. The findings of this study show the need to further understand how first-generation immigrants, particularly from Asia, might understand and experience their cultural identities, and how and when these particularized identities become salient in their lives. Further, the findings show that CPA would benefit from approaching the clients’ group identities as both national and racial, which can bring greater attention to not only the racial politics in the United States. but also the geopolitical relations between the United States and Asian nations.

Lastly, based on the findings on avowal and ascription processes, this study suggests that the construction and production of cultural avowals and ascriptions might be one useful way of thinking about cultural identity negotiation. Specifically, the production of cultural avowals and ascriptions suggest negotiation as involving processes of constructing cultural avowals and ascriptions from disparate, contradictory, competing cultural identities that are also historical, contextual, and relational. This is consistent with Mendoza, Halualani, and Drzewiecka’s (2002) view of identity construction in

intercultural communication as a process that “always involves a conscious or unconscious process of suturing, a way of sewing together disparate, sometimes contradictory elements as well as non-necessary relations to produce an appearance or feel of one-ness, continuity, id-entity, stability, and coherence” (p. 316). Also, conceiving cultural identity negotiation in terms of negotiated constructions of cultural avowals by “insiders” and ascriptions imposed by “outsiders” brings in a focus on identity negotiation as a relational process.

A weakness of cultural identity theory demonstrated in the current study was that asking direct questions about cultural identities in interviews didn’t always generate clear descriptions, nor did it encourage in-depth exploration of how cultural identities are contextually sustained, or negotiated, managed, and challenged in interactions. However, the interview guide questions about relationships with similar and different status group members and the work of the organization did generate detailed views. Also, the interview context as occurring in the organization and with me, a volunteer, and norms encouraging relational harmony and discussion of cultural identity issues participants were comfortable sharing, rather than ones they found challenging.

### ***Standpoint Theory***

Standpoint theory assisted and advanced this study in several ways. Tenets and concepts from standpoint theory were helpful to better understand intersecting cultural identities as particularized social locations my participants spoke from. First, standpoint theory provided this research a useful framework to design and understand how organizational status positions might intersect and interact with societal positionings to structure and organize respondents’ experiences into categories such as immigrant or

Asian. As Wood (1992) states, standpoint theory uses marginalized lives as “the *starting point*” from which to design research and frame questions (p. 12, emphasis in original); therefore, the standpoint perspective helps to justify the different views and experiences that emerged in this study. In turn, this study extends the applicability of standpoint theory, using organizational status positions as “subjective vantage points,” as Orbe (1998, p. 234) phrases it, to understand experiences of organization members. For example, the use of organizational status groups and positions in this study highlight both common and differential standpoints across the status groups that implicated relations of power and differential knowledge.

Second, standpoint epistemology as conceived by Collins (1997, 2000) was useful to this study. It depicts the experiences of the marginalized, such as those of Black women in Collins’ study (2000), as “one specific social location for examining points of connection among multiple epistemologies” (Collins, 2000, p. 270). In this study, the various social locations not only enabled the examination of multiple forms of knowledge about each NPO but also enabled me to interrogate how different orientations to knowledge and what counts as “real” might be related. Specifically, when comparing and contrasting epistemologies across status positions, the women clients’ and production employees’ knowledge might be co-opted through their dependence on the NPO working with them. For example, the theme of “dependable care” described by the Asian women clients indicated that they believed CPA would “always be there” and would help them to get things they needed. The reality was, as one of the staff, Megan, pointed out, CPA would be shut down when it ran out of funding. In fact, Kumico mentioned to me that a third of CPA’s funding was not renewed and would run out by July, 2010. In this study,

discourses revealed assumptions about what women clients and employees were capable of knowing and doing, which drove the design of services and programs. The clients' knowledge of CPA seemed to be co-opted, sheltered, and filtered by the staff and interns working with them.

In SEHW, the production women's knowledge of SEHW seemed sheltered and filtered by the managers, supervisors, and directors who made most decisions but didn't necessarily make them transparent or explain how decisions were made. Thus, this claim about sheltered knowledge is consistent with the foundational tenet of standpoint theory that argues "knowledge always arises in social locations and is structured by power relations" (O'Brien Hallstein, 2000, p. 5). Embedded in this claim is the notion that standpoints also reflect differential social positions in the organization, and differential levels of knowledge and material conditions and embodied locations. In contrast, some standpoint theorists such as O'Brien Hallstein and Welton emphasize that "a standpoint is *developed* through struggle" and requires active, political resistance (O'Brien Hallstein, 2000, p. 7, emphasis in original). The challenge remains to theorize standpoints in ways that honor different forms of epistemology structured by differential power relations and, at the same time, advocate for political commitment to resist structural domination.

### ***Relational Dialectics Theory***

At the heart of relational dialectical theory is "the interplay of competing discourses" that give meaning to relationships (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, p. 349). This study applies the concept of relational dialectics to how organizational members come to understand and assign meanings to their relationships. In this study, the dialectical perspective was particularly useful in gaining insight into the unique norms for relating

within each NPO that affected the ways in which relationships and status hierarchies were negotiated. For instance, in SEHW the family environment was dominant and in some instances structured staff-employee relationships to resemble the familial relationships between mothers and daughters, which then naturalized status hierarchies for the staff and production women. Relational dialectics theory usually examines interpersonal relationships. This study extends the utility of this theoretical perspective to examine how discourses about relationships within an organization are structured by tensions and contradictions.

Consistent with a dialectical perspective of examining intercultural communication (Martin et al., 2002), relational dialectics reflect complexity, paradox, and contradiction in intercultural relationships. Viewing intercultural relationship discourses through the lens of emergent relational dialectics was a useful and valid approach in this study, in contrast to applying oversimplified dimensions of cultural variation like collectivism vs. individualism (e.g., Hofstede, 1991), which are often used to examine communication conduct preferences across national cultural groups.

### ***Critical Discourse Analysis***

Consistent with my integration of critical and interpretation orientations, I drew on elements of both van Dijk's (1998) social-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Fairclough's (2001) five-step model to guide my analysis. Both van Dijk and Fairclough attend to systematic exploration of the relationships between discourse, power relations, ideology, and society. In this study, it was necessary to focus on discourse as language use, communication of beliefs, and interactions in social situations through which unequal social arrangements and relations are ideologically

(re)produced, sustained, perpetuated, negotiated, and challenged. Guided by CDA, my examination of discourses from interviews and organizational texts aligned with analyses of social structures such as immigration policies, legal institutions, and social norms that enabled and constrained issues of abuse and poverty. Also, CDA was useful and consistent for me to meet both my goals of investigating culture, communication, identity, and relationships in order to promote socially just communication in intercultural relationships.

Specifically, Fairclough's (2001) model was incorporated to give more attention to the interactions between discursive practices and reproduction of social order. In this study, ideological beliefs embedded in interview and organizational discourses functioned, to some degree, to reproduce patriarchy and white supremacy. These became evident through ignoring attention to patterns of (white) male abuse as well as top-down, authoritarian leadership, and privileging higher status individuals in leadership (i.e., white women and Asians with higher education levels) as well as valorizing whiteness as the standard for model minorities as well as immigrants.

Van Dijk's (1998) social cognitive approach to CDA was instrumental to this study in applying CDA to analyze interview discourses and attending to relationships between discourse, cognition, and ideology. In particular, van Dijk's notion of ideology as ideological/sociocultural belief systems shared by members of groups enabled me to analyze and uncover the ideologies that were embedded in, structured, and organized intersecting cultural identity positioning and relationship negotiation. Moreover, van Dijk's model addresses systems of ideological beliefs that work together, which enabled me to examine broader ideologies such as benevolent liberalism that was reproduced by

and structured the clusters of ideological beliefs in this study. While van Dijk's approach served as a useful framework to begin analysis, his approach doesn't really lend itself to any specific or concrete methods of CDA. In fact, van Dijk (2008) proposed a change in the label *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)* to *Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)* to describe research that focuses on the discursive reproduction of social inequality and power abuse (p. 2, emphasis in original). Also, van Dijk's approach does not offer detail on applying findings for social change. For instance, van Dijk's (1993) research evidenced the reproduction of racism in elite discourses; however, his approach did not lend itself to any concrete recommendations and implications for practices and policies. Therefore, my approach expands this model.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

This research addresses an important, but often overlooked, phenomenon of intercultural relationships with attention to the role of negotiating intersecting cultural identity positions and status hierarchies in two social justice-oriented NPOs. Findings in this study document ways in which intersecting cultural identity positions and status relationship negotiation affected the work of the two NPOs. Members from both organizations expressed interest in reading my analysis. This speaks to the relevance and need of this study. Overall, this study argues that cultural identities and relationships are best understood as contextually driven and having political implications, because they reflect status positions and have implications for the work of organizations and the lives of the marginalized clients/employees.

Using a critical/interpretive theoretical perspective was beneficial in this study. It enabled an analytical process that began from individuals' concrete lived experiences and



hence positions relative to others, which are central not only to the interpretive perspective but also to standpoint theory (Orbe, 1998). Guided by a critical perspective with attention to structural constraints, the order of the research questions, and therefore analysis, increased in complexity and built on the descriptive findings by adding attention to discursive (re)productions that were consequential, historical, political, and contextual. This integrated critical/interpretive theoretical perspective enabled me to employ systematic analysis that honored lived experiences and examined the ways which lived experiences were contextually enabled and constrained.

Using a case study method provided rich and meaningful data and was appropriate to researching nonprofit organizations and organizational communication (Arneson, 1993; McNabb, 2008). The case study approach was sensitive to the particular context of each NPO and enabled collecting multiple perspectives on the organization. Specifically, the participant observations helped to familiarize me with both organizations and prepared me for the in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews allowed participants to elaborate and describe their experiences as extensively as they wanted and enabled both the interviewees and me to follow up or clarify as needed. In the analysis, I featured the voices of the respondents and provided information about the questions posed, which increases the opportunity for readers to assess validity and relevance of interpretations. The organizational documents provided another perspective to public discourses from the NPOs as well as helped establish the historical contexts of both organizations.

Another strength of this study was the design using three status positions and standpoints (i.e., staff, board of directors/interns/volunteers, and women served) to frame

the views of each NPO. This design not only enabled me to examine three status-specific perspectives on the organization but also brought in complexity about how cross-status relationships were negotiated. It allowed systematic exploration of how status functioned and affected the work of the NPOs and enabled me to share with each NPO examples of discourses about how relational descriptions both enabled and constrained the work of each NPO.

Some of the strengths listed also became limitations. In terms of the design of three status positions, there were several instances where the participants had been in two different status groups. For example, Kaya was an employee at SEHW before becoming a board member even though I tried to distinguish, whenever possible, the specific role she was speaking from. Also, not all members from the three status groups interacted with one another, which demonstrated the varying salience of the relationships. As well status does not come from organizational role alone, but is constructed. Alicia and Lucia were positioned into both higher status locations as well as being allies to both the board and the production women, because of their demonstrated abilities to act as middle range bridges. Outside of the three status groups were individuals such as funders, community partners, members from collaborating organizations, and contractors in the case of SEHW who were not interviewed; such interviews could have brought in additional perspectives about the two NPOs.

In terms of the recruitment of interview participants, all clients and production employees were recruited by a staff member within the organization (i.e., Kumico in CPA and Lucia in SEHW). While their recruiting allowed their selection of participants that they deemed appropriate for this study, at the same time, it also enabled them to

prescreen particular views and/or individuals that they wanted to be included or excluded in this study. Though most participating clients and production employees showed a bias toward commenting more on positive aspects of each NPO (e.g., emphasizing dependability in CPA and no conflict in SEHW), the research design using three status groups enabled me to interpret the positive bias through the lens of differential status positions that further expose the operations of hierarchical status positioning.

In terms of the actual interviewing processes, there were several interviews with women served from both organizations that were somewhat limited by my linguistic abilities. Interviews with three production employees in SEHW (i.e., Dora, Greta, and Emily) were conducted with an interpreter. The presence of the interpreter, to a certain extent, changed the dynamics of the interviewing and also might have prompted the three women to purposefully give socially appropriate responses. Interviews with two clients in CPA (i.e., Thi and Tricia) were limited by my inability to speak their native languages. Also, my cultural experiences and perspectives came into play in the interviews in that I was more an “insider” when interviewing participants from CPA, whereas I was more an “outsider” when interviewing participants from SEHW, particularly with the production women with whom I shared only 1-2 cultural identities such as being female and somewhat affiliated with SEHW.

With respect to interview protocol, the set of questions about intercultural alliance relationships resulted in my seeing the need to broaden the conception of alliances. Some respondents described relationships with other members of the NPO; others responded about alliance relationships with collaborating agencies; others commented on forming groups of community alliances; and still others responded that the notion of allies was

“too cold” or “at arms’ length.” One of the most thought-provoking responses to questions about intercultural alliances was from Sandra who described, in her view, the relationships in SEHW as somewhere in between allies and families. She said:

There is something in between families and alliances and I don’t know what it is, but that’s what we are. That’s the space we occupy and I think that because people have higher expectations of one another than just work, but your family is your family is your family, particularly in the Hispanic communities. I mean, come on, you know when you are not family, you are not family; but when you know you are family that means something and people overuse it sometimes. I mean I say, ‘Yeah we are family; we are a dysfunctional family but we are a family here.’ But it’s not the right word.

Though initially her comments suggested an in-between-ness, her last point is that “we are a family,” but there may be a better word to describe what kind of family. As well, others affiliated with SEHW did use the term family frequently. Given the participants responses, overall, I chose to concentrate on relationship negotiation in general rather than alliances specifically.

Interview discourses from self-identified Hispanic/Mexican (immigrant) women in this study suggest the notion of *family* as a metaphor for thinking about alliances. For instance, Felicia described her conception of relationships in SEHW as a family: “It is like a family. Sometimes the younger kids or brothers and sisters who don’t agree with their responsibilities as the older ones [allocated], but they [the older ones] know no more than the younger ones.” The notion of *family* in this study connotes sharing food, support, prayer, affection, loyalty, and close ties as the foundation for building alliances.

Constructing alliances through the metaphor of *family* seems to depoliticize relationships, particularly those involving hierarchy or status difference. When allies are treated as family members, it assumes shared interests, takes for granted being on the same side,

and diminishes the historical, political, and institutional ramification of relating across lines of difference.

### **Applications of the Study**

The pragmatic goal of this study, as I stated previously, is to promote socially responsible intercultural relationships that feature equitable power relations and seek knowledge with individuals, groups, and communities to promote their goals of social justice. As a starting point to achieve this overarching goal, I use Collier's (2002) three aspects of intercultural alliances (i.e., acknowledging power and unearned privilege, impact of history, and orientations of affirmation) and synthesize a list of principles that appear central to intercultural relationship processes in the two NPOs in this study.

1. Uncover and examine biases, levels of privileges, and hidden assumptions, especially those associated with divergent and intersecting cultural identities (e.g., race, class, gender, professions, educational levels, ethnicity/nationality, immigration background, etc.), which become the foundation of relationships and the work of the NPO.
2. Identify and attend to structural, ideological and institutional forces that can and might affect the work of the nonprofit (e.g., legal, policies, economics, histories, etc.)
3. Identify how status positions are negotiated in relationships among and between groups. Individuals interact with others in the nonprofit organization from their status positions, which shape their views of the organization. That is, individuals occupy different status positions understand the nonprofit organization through

somewhat similar yet different lenses. These become mechanisms of influence and relate to levels of privilege.

4. Recognize and encourage dialogue about relationships that are conducive to the work of the nonprofit organization. Within status groups and across status groups, utilize staff/intern bridges as well. Include attention to professional change; relationships wax and wane in response to relational, contextual, social, and political events that come into play. Also, discussing dialectical tensions may provide additional options for conduct (i.e., moving away from “family” intimacy to engage difference may be useful for some topics).
5. Involve and incorporate representations and voices from all status groups (e.g., volunteers, individuals served, and community partners) in establishing and building the work of the nonprofit organization. More input from more voices may increase the potential for relevant programs and sustainable outcomes.

How should these principles be engaged? Some ideas that I have to share with representatives of both NPOs include: (a) more attention and shared information about influences from broader contexts and social institutions, such as immigration policies and globalization; (b) more attention to legislation at the city and the state level pertaining to the issues that drive the problems the women served might encounter; (c) more efforts to institutionalize critical reflections by the various status groups on the missions and work of the NPO through anonymous evaluations and annual reviews, (d) more efforts to identify and utilize individuals who could serve as *bridges* in bringing attention to critical issues that otherwise would not have been visible; and (e) more attention to “client

friendly” programs and services that incorporate clients’ inputs and perspectives in conceiving, developing, implementing, and evaluating them.

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed numerous overarching themes about discursive construction of organizational identities; intersecting cultural identities; dialectical tensions and status relationship negotiation; and ideologies, as well as reproduction of broader social order. I hope the efforts in this study will trigger attention to, interest in, and conversations about how cultural identities and relationships have consequences for the work of organizations. Sandra’s comment below about the role of relationships and people working in social change illustrates the spirit of engagement that I want to demonstrate to researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers.

Relationships with the people here are important to me. I don’t know if anybody else in the world is interested in that, but I am, because I think that is what makes it about social change. If it’s just, ‘what’s your theory of change?’ If you are just running a business or doing a charity, there is no change happening. I mean you are being a good person and you are providing something, but there is no change happening.

The appropriate questions now may be—How can members of nonprofit organizations, such as the two cases studies in this investigation, engage productively in conversations about cultural differences that help to sustain its work? How can nonprofit organizations achieve their goals and mission in light of the structural constraints that enable and constrain their work?

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APPENDIX A  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1

*CPA Staff Members Interviewed*

	Age	Self-identification	Edu. level	Time involved
Kumico	46	Counselor, Japanese	Master's degree	3.5 years
Rachana	46	Indian, Feminist	Ph.D	3 years
Jane	52	Jane	Master's degree	1.75 years
Megan	25	Native Eurasian	Some MA coursework	1.5 years

Table 2

*CPA Volunteers and Board Members Interviewed*

	Age	Self-identification	Edu. level	Time involved
Lanh	75	Vietnamese	Ph.D	1 year
Iago	60	Japanese	Master's degree	2 years
Zach	49	Asian American	Ph.D	2 years
Ami	40	Japanese women	Some college	1 year
Adan	40	Asian	Some MA coursework	0.5 year
George	25	Chinese	Bachelor's degree	0.5 year
Dung	23	Vietnamese	Some college	0.5 year

Table 3

*CPA Clients Interviewed*

	Age	Self-identification	Edu. level	Time involved
Fabia	66	Japanese	High school diploma	1 year
Tricia	64	Japanese American	Bachelor's degree	1 year
Yuru	45	Chinese, Asian	Bachelor's degree	2 years
Sabal	25	Indian/Human being	Master's degree	1 year
Thi	24	Vietnamese	Some college	1.5 years

Table 4

*SEHW Staff Members Interviewed*

	Age	Self-identification	Edu. level	Time involved
Sandra	50	White	Master's degree	15 years
Alicia	41	Colombiana-Americana	Master's degree	11 years
Sarah	63	Manager	High school diploma	9 years
Fonda	43	Supervisor of Prod.	High school diploma	15 years
Lucia	37	Mexican	Bachelor's degree	5 years

Table 5

*SEHW Board of Directors and Volunteers Interviewed*

	Age	Self-identification	Edu. level	Time involved
Sister Brooks	72	Spanish	Ph.D	15 years
Kate	24	Student	Some MA coursework	0.5 year
Margaret	32	Caucasian/White	Master's degree	1.5 years
Kaya	40	Japanese Canadian	MBA	12 years
Janet	57	Caucasian	Ph.D	3 years
Carla	37	European American	MBA	4 years

Table 6

*SEHW Production Employees Interviewed*

	Age	Self-identification	Edu. level	Time involved
Felicia	52	Mexican	Some college	14 years
Lani	76	Hispanic	Some college	15 years
Dora	39	Mexican	High school diploma	15 years
Greta	43	Mexican	Some college	5 years
Emily	37	Hispana	High school diploma	12 years

APPENDIX B  
IRB APPROVAL



THE UNIVERSITY of  
NEW MEXICO

Main Campus Institutional Review Board

Human Research Protections Office

MSC08 4560

1 University of New Mexico~Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

<http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/HRRC/>

28-Aug-2009

Responsible Faculty: Mary Collier

Investigator: Yea-Wen Chen

Dept/College: Communication Journalism

*SUBJECT: IRB Approval of Research - Modification*

*Protocol #: 28072*

*Project Title: Negotiating Intercultural Alliance Building and Transforming Alliance Into Action in the Context of Non-Profit Organizations*

*Type of Review: Expedited Review*

*Approval Date: 28-Aug-2009*

*Expiration Date: 09-Apr-2010*

The Main Campus Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved the above referenced protocol. It has been approved based on the review of the following:

1. Change in title to: Intercultural Alliances in Nonprofits: Cultural Identity Negotiation during Moments of Connection and Disconnection;
2. Investigator Protocol submitted 07/22/09;
3. UNM Consent version 07/20/09;
4. Interview Guide submitted 07/22/09;
5. Observation Template submitted 07/22/09.

Consent Decision:

Amended consent(s) attached.

When consent is required, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) to ensure that ethical and legal informed consent has been obtained from all research participants. A date stamped original of the approved consent form(s) is attached, and copies should be used for consenting participants during the above noted approval period.

As the principal investigator of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:

**Renewal:** Unless granted exemption, your protocol must be re-approved each year in order to continue the research. You must submit a Progress Report no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date noted above.

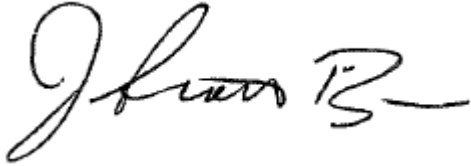
**Adverse Events:** Any adverse events or reactions must be reported to the IRB immediately.

**Modifications:** Any changes to the protocol, such as procedures, consent/assent forms, addition of subjects, or study design must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval.

**Completion:** When the study is concluded and all data has been de-identified (with no link to identifiers), submit a Final Report Form to close your study.

Please reference the protocol number and study title in all documents and correspondence related to this protocol.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Scott Tonigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "B" at the end.

**J. Scott Tonigan, PhD**  
**Chair**  
**Main Campus IRB**

\* Under the provisions of this institution's Federal Wide Assurance (FWA00004690), the Main Campus IRB has determined that this proposal provides adequate safeguards for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects involved in the study and is in compliance with HHS Regulations (45 CFR 46).

APPENDIX C  
CONSENT FORM

University of New Mexico  
**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Yea-Wen Chen, a Ph.D. student from the department of Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico. The results will contribute to my dissertation research that I am currently pursuing under the guidance of Prof. Mary Jane Collier.

You were identified as a possible volunteer in this study based on the following criteria: (1) you currently work in a non-profit organization working toward social justice; (2) you have lived experiences as an intercultural ally; and (3) you are currently engaged in intercultural alliance relationships that work to further the common interests of group members.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how individuals within non-profit organizations in New Mexico negotiate and form alliances/coalitions and work toward social justice. Specifically, this study focuses on exploring the conditions under which allies negotiate their cultural identities and relationships and transform ideas into actions that promote change. For the purpose of this study, intercultural allies are defined as those in relationships working to achieve or further the common interests and/or goals of group members.

**PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES:**

This one-time semi-structured interview will last approximately 75-120 minutes. The interview questions relate to your cultural identities, your experiences of negotiating different cultural identities, your experiences with intercultural alliance relationships, and your views on the nonprofit organization that you are affiliated with. Your responses will be kept confidential. Since your participation is completely voluntary, you may choose not to answer any question during this interview without any penalties whatsoever. Your responses will be tape-recorded only with your permission. You will not receive any monetary reward for your participation.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**

There may be some minimal risks to you. Because the interview questions will ask you about your personal identities and relationships, you may feel uncomfortable in responding to some questions. Also, you may feel uncomfortable in talking about how you negotiate and build intercultural alliance relationships. Again, you may choose not to respond to any question, discuss your discomfort with the interviewer, or stop the interview at any time. Your answers will be used only for academic purposes and your responses will be kept confidential.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY:**

Your participation in this study will give you the opportunity to reflect on your identities and alliance relationships. This is an opportunity for you to share your views about your experiences with a researcher who really wants to hear what you have to say even though there are no tangible or physical benefits to you. Also, this study will contribute to an advanced understanding of the influence of cultural identities on intercultural alliance building. This study may potentially lead to a development model of how individuals and groups can successfully form intercultural alliance relationships.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Your interview responses will be used strictly for academic purposes. Your name will not appear in any research reports or transcripts; and all participants will be assigned pseudonyms in the final research report. Quotations from interview responses will be listed with the pseudonyms only. Prof. Mary Jane Collier, my dissertation advisor, and I will be the only two people who have access to the audio tapes and the transcriptions of your interview. Prof. Mary Jane Collier as well as the other three members of my dissertation committee will read the final report of



my dissertation and portions of the transcripts. The audio-taped data will be erased at the completion of the project or whenever your request me to do so via email or phone call. For contact information of Yea-Wen Chen, please see below.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:**

You can choose whether or not to participate in this study. If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS AND REVIEW BOARD:**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Yea-Wen Chen, Ph.D. Student UNM Department of Communication and Journalism MSC03 2240 1 University of New Mexico Albuquerque, NM 87131 Email: <a href="mailto:yeawen@unm.edu">yeawen@unm.edu</a> Phone: 505-277-2100	Prof. Mary Jane Collier, Faculty UNM Department of Communication and Journalism MSC03 2240 1 University of New Mexico Albuquerque, NM 87131 Email: <a href="mailto:mjc@unm.edu">mjc@unm.edu</a> Phone: 505-277-2156
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

If you have other concerns or complaints, please contact the University of New Mexico Human Research Protections Office at 505-272-1129.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:**

I understand the procedures described above. I understand that the interview will be audio-taped only with my permission. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR:**

In my judgment, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly providing informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPROVED: 08/28/09	 <b>OFFICIAL USE ONLY</b> <i>Human Research Protections Office</i>	EXPIRES: 04/09/10
The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board		

APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Instructions:** The interview questions will relate to how you understand and experience your cultural identities and intercultural relationships. Your responses will be kept confidential. Since your participation is completely voluntary, you may choose not to answer any questions if you feel uncomfortable during this interview. Your responses are being tape-recorded only with your permission.

## Interview Guide

### *I. Background*

1. Please briefly describe the following elements related to your experiences in/with this non-profit organization (NPO):
  - *For Staff*, including directors, coordinators, program managers, board members, etc.
    - a) Current title or position
    - b) Primary role(s) and responsibilities
    - c) Brief history of working in this organization
  - *For Volunteers/Community Partners*
    - a) How do you come to know about this organization?
    - b) Reasons for wanting to work with this organization
    - c) Brief history of working with this organization
  - *For Women served by the NPO*
    - a) How do you come to know about this organization?
    - b) Services that you have or had received from this organization
    - c) Brief history of interacting with this organization

### *II. Relationships with Members of the Three Status Groups*

2. Describe relationships with: (And how do they work?)
  - *For Staff*  
Your relationships: a) with the other staff, b) with volunteers, and c) with women served
  - *For Volunteers/Community Partners*  
Your relationships: a) with staff, b) with the other volunteers, and c) with women served
  - *For Women served*  
Your relationships: a) with staff, b) with volunteers, and c) with the other women served
3. Describe a story of connection with: (i.e., consequences?)
  - *For Staff*
    - a) with the other staff, b) with volunteers, and c) with women served
  - *For Volunteers/Community Partners*
    - a) with staff, b) with the other volunteers, and c) with women served
  - *For Women served*
    - a) with staff, b) with volunteers, and c) with the other women served

4. Describe a story of disconnection with: (i.e., consequences?)
  - *For Staff*
    - a) with the other staff, b) with volunteers, and c) with women served
  - *For Volunteers/Community Partners*
    - a) with staff, b) with the other volunteers, and c) with women served
  - *For Women served*
    - a) with staff, b) with volunteers, and c) with the other women served

### ***III. Cultural Identity Negotiation during Moments of Connection and Disconnection***

5. How do you describe your cultural group identities (Consider: nationality, race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, sex, sexual orientation, level of education, professional/job status, language spoken, area of residence, political orientation, religion, etc.)?
6. When you are here (in this organization):
  - a) Which cultural identities are important to you?
  - b) Which cultural identities are you proud of? And why?
  - c) Has there been a cultural group identity that you don't talk about, enact, or feel a need to protect? And why?
7. How do you think others (i.e., members of the other two status groups) view you? (e.g., As Hispanic, as a Hispanic woman, as poor, or what? As Asian, as an Asian woman who suffer from domestic violence, or what?)
8. How do you want to be seen by others (i.e., the other two status groups)?
9. Can you think of an instance, if any, in which you feel defensive about one of your cultural identities? (Consider: a disagreement, or an argument.) Where were you? Who was there? What happened? What did you say or do? Why did you do that (i.e., strategy)? Why did you say or do that? What did the other party or parties say or do? What was the outcome? What did you feel after? In hindsight, was there anything that you wish you could have said or done that would have made a difference? What do you feel after? What was the outcome?
10. Can you think of an instance, if any, in which you received validation or affirmation of one or more of your cultural identities? What was said or done? Where were you? Who was there? What happened? What did you say or do? What was the outcome? What did you feel after?

### ***IV. Intercultural Alliance Relationships***

11. I'm interested in the kind of relationships in which two (2) people recognize their cultural differences and work together toward a common goal. They are sometimes called allies.
  - a) Do you have relationships like this here at \_\_\_\_\_? Please describe a relationship.

- b) What term or terms would you use to describe this relationship?
  - c) When do you go to this person? When do you seek her/him out?
  - d) Do you have these “ally” relationships with any others (staff, volunteers, the women served)?
12. Share a story of when connecting with your “ally” was helpful in accomplishing something in the nonprofit (or in the program/workshop you are in).
13. During your time in this organization, please describe:
- a) Have your “allies” changed over time? Please describe the change.
  - b) What is an example of a critical point/event, if any, where you knew that you had an “ally?” How did you feel at the time?
  - c) Please describe an instance, if any, in which you felt disappointed, betrayed, or lost an “ally.”
  - d) Can you think of an instance, if any, in which you chose NOT to speak/act as an “ally” for someone else? If so, please describe.
14. Do you talk about issues such as power, status, privilege, resource differences, and hierarchical differences with \_\_\_\_\_(e.g., members of the other status groups such as the staff, the volunteer, the women served, etc.)? Why or why not?

#### V. *Nonprofit Organizational Work*

15. What do you understand the goals of this organization to be? What are your goals/desires in this organization/working here?

#### 16. *For Staff and Women Served*

Overall, would you say that your relationships with people here who have different roles in the organization than you do (e.g., staff—volunteers, staff—women served) are effective, that is they help facilitate the work of this nonprofit, or are less effective and hinder the work of the nonprofit? Please explain.

#### *For Volunteers*

Overall, would you say that your relationships with people here who have different cultural backgrounds from you are effective, that is they help facilitate the work of this nonprofit, or are less effective and hinder the work of the nonprofit? Please explain.

17. What 2-3 things do you like the most about this organization/working here?

18. What 2-3 things can you recommend for this organization to be more effective?

19. What advice would you give to people working with nonprofits about building relationships among those who have different roles and cultural backgrounds?

20. Who else should I interview?

21. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

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