



Instructions for authors, subscriptions and further details:

<http://ijep.hipatiapress.com>

## **Layered Identities and Being Gabby: A Five-Year Longitudinal Case Study**

Catherine Compton-Lilly<sup>1</sup>

1) Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison, United States.

Date of publication: February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Edition period: February 2014 - June 2014

---

**To cite this article:** Compton-Lilly, C. (2014). Layered Identities and Being Gabby: A Five-Year Longitudinal Case Study. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 3(1), 1-20. doi: 10.4471/ijep.2014.01

**To link this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/ijep.2014.01>

---

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The terms and conditions of use are related to the Open Journal System and to [Creative Commons Attribution License \(CC-BY\)](#).

# **Layered Identities and Being Gabby: A Five-Year Longitudinal Case Study**

Catherine Compton-Lilly  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

## **Abstract**

---

Compton-Lilly examines the identity construction of one student, Gabby, over a five year period to explore layers of gender and race that affect identity construction. In particular, she asks how does being female and Latino contribute to the ways Gabby and her family make sense of Gabby. Compton-Lilly draws on a rich data set (e.g., observations, interviews, artwork, photographs, writing) to explore the various ways Gabby enacts her identities in the contexts of home and school. Through this analysis, the roots of intersectionality become visible. In short, we begin to understand how identities are enacted within contested spaces where the figured worlds people bring – entailing the ways of being, acting, and interacting that are available to self and others – align and clash both presenting and restricting possibilities.

---

**Keywords:** identity, gender, intersectionality

# **Identidades Estratificadas y ser Gabby: Un Estudio de Caso Longitudinal de Cinco Años**

Catherine Compton-Lilly  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

## **Resumen**

---

Compton-Lilly examina la construcción identitaria de una estudiante, Gabby, a lo largo de un periodo de cinco años, con la finalidad de explorar los estratos de género y raza que afectan a la construcción de la identidad. En particular, la autora se pregunta como el ser mujer y latina contribuye a las formas en que Gabby y su familia crean sentido de Gabby. Compton-Lilly se basa en un conjunto de datos variado (observaciones, entrevistas, trabajos artísticos, fotografías, escritos) con el objetivo de explorar las diferentes vías a través de las que Gabby recrea sus identidades en los contextos del hogar familiar y de la escuela. Con este análisis, las raíces de interseccionalidad comienzan a hacerse visibles. Pronto, comenzamos a comprender como las identidades se presentan en espacios donde los mundos figurados que las personas llevan consigo –conllevando formas de ser, actuar e interactuar que se encuentran disponibles para la persona y para los demás- se alinean y chocan presentando y restringiendo posibilidades.

---

**Palabras clave:** identidad, género, interseccionalidad





Figure 1. Gabby's self portraits at ages 5, 7, and 9.

**T**his is Gabby – at least this is how Gabby depicted herself at ages 5, 7, and 9. Gabby is an energetic yet cautious child. After working with Gabby and her family for five years, I find her a talkative research participant who often speaks about her three older brothers, her pets, sports, and her fishing excursions. She is also the girl who cried in kindergarten and in first grade when her mother or father dropped her off at school. And she is a child in an immigrant family. Gabby has many interests, partakes in many activities, and enacts her identity in various ways.

### Theorizing Identities

While early conceptions of identity, conceptualized literacy as emerging during adolescence as a involving stable and core dimension (Erikson, 1959), more recent theories treat identities as fluid, multiple, constructed, and negotiated (Gee, 2000/2001; Goffman, 1963; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). In this article, I examine the identity construction of one student, Gabby, over a five-year period to explore layers of gender and race that affect identity construction. In particular, I ask how does being

female and Latino contribute to the ways Gabby and her family make sense of herself. I draw on a rich data set (e.g., observations, interviews, artwork, photographs, writing) to explore the various ways Gabby enacts her identities in the contexts of home and school.

I maintain that identities are not crafted on blank slates. Understanding how Gabby negotiates her identities at home and school requires attending to the social contexts she inhabits. To explore social spaces, Holland and her colleagues (1998) utilize the concept of “figured worlds” to explain how people operate within social fields. By “figured world” they mean a “socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). Within figured worlds, aspects of identity including race, social class, and gender assume particular meanings. People’s figured worlds are constantly constructed and re-constructed through the identification of significant events and actions in daily life, evolving understandings about how and why things happen, interpretations of new experiences based on those that came before, and predictions about how events will occur in the future.

Holland and her colleagues explain that while figured worlds encompass the social realities that people understand themselves to inhabit, these figured worlds are “mediated by relations of power” (Holland et al. 1998, p. 60). However, people’s actions and identities are not predetermined by the social and economic contexts into which one is born, ‘People’s identities and agency are formed dialectically and dialogically in these “as if worlds”’ (Holland et al., 1998, p. 49). As Holland et al. (1998) explain, “People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are” (p. 3).

Both Gabby and her mother understand and experience particular positionings and expectations related to gender and race. As the data presented below will illustrate, gender and race invite and allow varying

degrees of non-compliance and pushback. However, these negotiations are complex and the significance of these dimensions of identity is not equal.

Grounded in legal studies (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) that have analyzed historical and continuing discrimination against Black people through the failure of legal structures to recognize the contingencies and challenges that operate at the intersection of race and gender. In particular, African American female scholars have named and explored intersectionality. As Collins notes:

As opposed to examining gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation as separate systems of oppression, the construct of intersectionality references how these systems mutually construct one another. Intersectional paradigms suggest that certain ideas and/or practices surface repeatedly across multiple systems of oppression. Serving as focal points for intersecting systems of oppression, these ideas and practices may be central to how gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation mutually construct one another. (Collins, 2000, p. 47-48)

Crenshaw described intersections of race and gender that reveal “the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the world is constructed” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). As King described in 1988:

The importance of any one factor in explaining black women’s circumstances thus varies depending on the particular aspect of our lived under consideration and the reference groups to whom we are compared. In some cases, race may be the more significant predictor of black women’s status; in others, gender or class may be more influential. (p. 48)

Collins (1998) presents a compelling analysis of family structures as exemplar spaces for exploring how constructs including gender, race, class and nation “mutually construct one another” (p. 63). In short, she argues that the intersections that define relationships across race, class, gender, and nationality in the larger society are echoed within family structures.

Drawing on Collin’s work (2000), I ask what new insights concerning the identity construction of immigrant youth become significant when intersectionality is used as a theoretical frame to explore identity construction for a young Latino child in an immigrant home.

### **Longitudinal Research, Identity Construction and Immigrant Families over Time**

Longitudinal qualitative studies are particularly important for understanding the experiences of immigrant children “as they encounter and negotiate differences between their cultural traditions and those of the host society” (Fuligni, 2001, pp. 567–568). While researchers have used longitudinal methods to document the strengths and experiences of immigrant students (Moje, Ciechanowski, Ellis, Rosario, & Collazo, 2004; Orellana, Reynolds, Dornier, & Meza, 2003; Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2000; Reese, Kroeseen, & Gallimore, 2000), they have not tracked students’ school trajectories or revealed the ways literacy and language learning, identity formation, and other factors intersect in the lives of children across time. Longitudinal data provides a rich perspective on long-term processes including identity construction and literacy learning.

Recent research suggests that both identities, literacy practices, and dispositions towards school are not constructed over short segments of time; instead they are constantly evolving constructions that simultaneously draw upon past experiences, pre-existing cultural models, and ongoing events (Gee, 2000-2001; Hawkins, 2005; McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Mishler, 1999). Researchers (Flores-González, 2002; Rymes, 2001) remind us that identities are socially constructed, multiple, and often contradictory. Hawkins’ work (2005) is particularly relevant to the current analysis. Not only does her account of two young bilingual learners in a kindergarten classroom challenge traditional claims that young children do not possess identities (e.g., Erickson, 1959), but her work also highlights the unique and

multi-layered negotiations that accompany identity construction for children from immigrant backgrounds.

### **Methodology**

The longitudinal study described in this paper is currently in its fifth year. Our collective case study involves 10 children from immigrant families that have come to the United States from all parts of the world. Gabby and her family entered the study when Gabby was in first grade. While during the first year of the project we visited Gabby's family five times, in subsequent years we visited the families and children's classrooms three times. Each year of the project, we collect three types of data: observations, spoken data, and artifacts. Data sources were carefully identified to highlight the various spaces that the immigrant families occupy or have occupied (i.e., home/neighborhood/ school; native country/country of residence) across time. Parallel data sets are being collected each year. Thus every year, we ask children to complete the same or similar tasks. For example, as presented in the opening of this article, we ask Gabby to draw her self-portrait each year. This allows us to explore both change and continuity across time. Data included observations of children at home and school, parent/student/family member interviews, additional student-created artifacts (e.g., writing samples, maps, photographs), and conversations about these artifacts. Interviews focused on children's school experiences, interests, literacy achievement, and literacy practices. We ask several questions that invite Gabby and her family members to share their thoughts about Gabby. What is she like? What activities and topics are of interest to her? And what types of books does Gabby like to read?

As we began our analysis of the data, we coded interviews and field notes using a combination of a priori and grounded cods to explore children's experiences relative to literacy, identity and schooling. Knowing that identity would be a focus of the project, an a priori code (child identity) was



created. For this paper, coded data within that stack was examined to explore the various identity enactments that Gabby displayed at home and school. Reflecting constructs relevant to a figured worlds theoretical frame, I attended to enactments of race and gender and how those enactments were treated (e.g., taken up, ignored, resisted) within the contexts of home and school. I also explored the ways participants described and analyzed their world attending to articulations of what should happen or what seemed inappropriate. In terms of gender and race, these identity enactments included things such as what girls should do and the assumptions that were reported to have been made about this Latina/o family.

In addition to these a priori codes, interviews and field notes were also subjected to grounded analysis which resulted on a set of tangential codes (e.g., reading achievement, race, friends) that became supplemental resources as we contextualized our analysis and made sense of emerging patterns related to identity. Finally, semi-structured interviews were also analyzed using discourse analysis. For example, we identified and examined various I-statements (Gee, 1999) made by participants to explore the language people use to present themselves. The longitudinal nature of the study also invited discourses analysis that focused on how participants used language to situate themselves within time (i.e., “now,” “then,” “before,” “after”) and space (i.e., “here,” “there,” “home,” “school,” “far away”).

Following our analysis of interviews and fieldnotes, we used triangulation methods to explore how identity was presented in various other artifacts including children’s self-portraits, student-taken photographs of their home and school, drawings of their community, and maps of their schools. While these student-created artifacts highlighted what children found important in the various spaces of their lives and provided clues as to how they viewed themselves only a sampling of these artifacts are presented in this article. Finally, classroom observation templates, included spaces for noting identity enactments (e.g., clothing worn, friendships enacted, books

read). Through this analysis, we identified two salient sets of identity enactments for Gabby related to gender and race.

### **Introducing Gabby and her Family**

For the first year of the study, Gabby and her family lived in low-income apartment buildings. At that time, Gabby's father was living with the family and assumed the job of grounds-keeper for the apartment complex in which they resided. During the second year of the study, Gabby's mother moved to small town about an hours drive from the city in which the research was conducted. Here they were able to draw on extended family networks to rent a small house. While the house and the neighborhood were in disrepair, the house provided more space for Gabby, her four brothers, and her mother. Across the street is a large river that runs alongside a community park that separates Gabby's house from the nearby school. The public bike path that runs alongside the river provides Gabby and her brothers access to the larger community including stores, fishing areas, beaches, and parks. However, living in this community also brings significant challenges. As Holland and her colleagues (1998) remind us, figured worlds are socially and historically constructed. Thus the fact that this community has been inhabited by white and working/farming class people for the past 150 years is significant. Unlike the university city in which the family formerly lived, this small town is racially homogeneous and politically conservative. In recent years, the town's automotive plants have closed down increasing rates of unemployment and raising fiscal challenges for the community. Thus competition for available resources (e.g., jobs, quality housing) and in some cases anger has been a result.

**Complicating Gender: Gabby is a Tomboy**

At a recent research meeting, one of my graduate students commented on the prevalence of pink among the female students in a primary classroom she visited. This graduate student reported that of the eight girls in the room, seven of them, including her focal child, were wearing bright pink. If Gabby had been a member of that classroom, she would have been the one child not wearing pink. As Gabby reported, “I’m a Tomboy. I like to stick around with my brothers.”

Apparently, Gabby’s Tomboy claims are well established in the family. Ms. Perez showed me a photograph of Gabby at about age three. She was sitting in a pink butterfly chair with a huge smile on her face.

CCL: I didn’t know you had a butterfly chair.

Jennifer: [That] is when I could get her to wear pink. Now I can’t.

CCL: You don’t do pink anymore? (Gabby shakes her head) Yeah, I understand that.

Jennifer: We don’t do girl clothes at all.

Over the past five years, I have consistently found Gabby dressed in her brothers’ oversized shirts - long sleeves extending over her small hands and shirt hems hanging past her knees. Gabby’s choice in clothing is an identity enactment that challenges traditional female norms. However, challenging this norm is viewed as reasonable to Ms. Jackson, Gabby’s classroom teacher from both grades two and three. In her figured world Gabby’s having three brothers explains her being a Tomboy:

She puts up a good front on being a tough girl. Like she will come in and talk about her brothers picking on her and doing things to her and beating her up and she’s like “that doesn’t hurt.” She’s like “I can take it.” Or she’ll have these phrases that [she says and] I’m like, “You sound like you’re eighteen years old.” Like she sounds like she’s mimicking something that maybe she has heard. But underneath of that, I mean, she really has a kind, kind heart.

As Gabby explained to me, “they pick on me and then I have to pick on them cause they always [be] mean.”

Affinity with her brothers and her desire to tag along led her to engagement with a favorite family activity – going fishing. Across the five years, Gabby’s father has taken her and her little brother fishing each summer and at several interviews, I have witnessed Gabby’s older brothers gathering their fishing poles and heading out to the nearest watering hole. In first grade, when asked what she liked to write about, Gabby answered, “mostly going fishing.” In grade two, Ms. Perez and Gabby were pleased that their new home in a smaller town was located near a river, “It’s just nice. We have a bridge right here and we walk and go fishing.” When asked to write a story, Gabby wrote, “My house is by the river.” In third and fourth grades, she wrote about going fishing and swimming with her brothers at a small beach near their favorite fishing spot. Fishing stories are the most common and complex accounts that Gabby contributes to the data set. Stories about fishing with dad, gathering worms, catching various kinds of fish, cooking the fish, the best places to fish, and lost bobbers are told and retold over time.



*Figure 2.* Gabby’s Neighborhood and the river.

Gabby was also interested in sports. Her older brothers played soccer and Gabby spoke repeatedly spoke about joining a team; by the summer before grade four, Gabby had turned her interest to football. She reported that she and two other girls were planning to join the boys' football team at school and that she sometimes played football with the neighborhood boys. She consistently identified gym as her favorite class explaining, "We get to like climb on walls. We get to run in circles. We get to play outside sometimes." Activity was key to Gabby's style. I remember accompanying her class on a first grade field trip and struggling to keep up with Gabby as she raced the boys - often leaving them and me far behind. Participating in fishing and sports involved Gabby's affiliation with her older brothers as she demonstrated her ability to hold her own. Gabby's enactments were not simple acts of imitation. Within her figured world, participating with her brother required being able to keep up and hold one's own ground.

Like many young girls, Gabby loves animals. While she speaks about her large and changing variety of pets (e.g., various dogs, cats, kittens, birds, and even lizards), Gabby favorite animals were "wild cats" including lions, cheetahs, and tigers as well as wild dogs and wolves. In fourth grade she chose the badger as the focus of her animal project at school. When I asked her mother if she thought that Gabby might eventually work with animals, she disagreed saying, "I can see something like fire fighter something that would actually just kind of, she [could] get into it and the adrenaline would just go."

By grade 4, Gabby was playing what she referred to as "violent games" first on X-Box and later on the family computer. She reported playing *Modern Warfare 3* and *Zombies* with her brothers. Gabby enthusiastically recounted the plots and challenges of each of these games highlighting actions and strategies. Action is a recurring motif that captures various enactments of Gabby's identity including sports, action-oriented videogames, and her fascination with wild animals.

While on a few occasions I observed Gabby sharing books or speaking to other girls in her class, over the five-year period, I did not note close friendships with other girls. When I asked her about friends in school she reported not having a close friend and described the “bad girl group.” She explained, “If they tell you to get away and you don’t, they will like *yell* at you.” Her teacher, Ms. Jackson, describes these girls as “very cliquey” but reports that Gabby does not seem to be particularly bothered by that. “I don’t think it phases her at all. Like she could care less.” Gabby’s closest friend at school is her neighbor, a boy named Paul, who Gabby describes as a “nerd.” Paul was also one of the boys Gabby played football with in the neighborhood. I regularly observed them sharing books and talking quietly during independent work time. In general, she leaves the girls alone.

Over time, Ms. Perez increasingly anticipated Gabby becoming more feminine. By grade 2, Ms. Perez optimistically reported that Gabby was slowly growing out of being a Tomboy noting that Gabby recently expressed an interest in getting her ears pierced but noted that “I still can’t get her to put on the girls clothes... if anything looks remotely girly, fringy, she won’t, she’s not going for it.” When Gabby was entering fourth grade, Ms. Perez noted, “She’s getting up there [in age]. I think she’s going to be blooming into a woman shortly. She’s very emotional, very like angry and then sad and then angry again.”

While most of Ms. Perez’s predictions of Gabby becoming more feminized have yet not proven true, in a few cases there does seem to be some evidence that she is growing out of her Tomboy nature. By the summer before fourth grade, Gabby had gotten her ears pierced and was excited about getting “golden earrings” for her birthday. A year later, with the help of her mother, Gabby dyed her hair deep black. However, Gabby still wears her brothers’ shirts and talks about sports, fierce animals, and avoids the girls in her class. In fourth grade, she explicitly told me again that she would not wear girl clothes.

She surprised me in third grade when referring to one of the Twilight movies she described her and her mother as “Jacob fans.” However, when I asked if she thought Jacob was cute, Gabby immediately reverted to talking about the movie’s action plot:

And my mother liked when he tried to protect Bella because, she slapped another werewolf. So she turned into a wolf and Jacob was like, “Run, Bella!” So she like ducked down and Jacob [went] like “Whoosh!” and right in the air he turned like [into] a werewolf.

Gabby was more interested in the movie’s action than in Jacob as a teen idol. Ms. Perez agreed that Gabby has not yet outgrown her Tomboy days, “I think she’ll probably do her girly-nesss at like [age] 13.”

Gender was a negotiation for Gabby. Having four brothers and a family that loved fishing and being outdoors were significant. In the case of gender, Gabby adopted family norms, while dismissing the pressure of her peers at school and the intermittent persistence of her mother to dress and act like a young lady. Gabby’s figured world and those of the people around her (her teacher, her brothers, her friend Paul, her mother) allowed her to be a Tomboy. While as a young child, Gabby appeared to have choice over her positioning relative to gender, challenging imposed identities related to race proved to be a bigger challenge for the Perez family.

### **Complicating Race: Being and Not Being Mexican**

While so far Gabby has been successful in negotiating gender expectations in ways that make sense to her family and her teacher, negotiations regarding race were more difficult. As will be described, while the family’s figured world allowed them the space to define themselves in ways that did not entail racial dimensions, the generally shared figured world of the community they moved to strongly imposed racial categorization on the family. On my initial visit to the family, I was intrigued by a comment made by Gabby’s father. As our introductory conversation ended, he made a rather

disparaging remark about the Mexicans that he worked with who could not speak English. Coming from a man of Latino heritage who was bilingual in Spanish, this puzzled me. He clearly distinguished himself, his family and his family from the Mexicans at work.

Ms. Perez described her family as having both Mexican and White roots and described Gabby's father as being born in Florida. When I asked whether he might have been either Mexican American or Cuban American, Ms. Perez responded, "I would say um probably Latin." At another interview she reported that he "probably" had Mexican roots. However, throughout the interviews, family members consistently challenged and complicated their Mexican heritage.

At times, it appeared that Gabby and her siblings were unaware of their heritage. When interviewing Ms. Perez, I asked her if she thought it was a good thing that her family had immigrated to the United States. Gabby's older brother, Donaldo, who was sitting nearby looked up and asked, "We came from Mexico?" Donald's question seemed authentic and he followed it up with "Mom, I never knew that." When asked, Donaldo described himself as "Hispanic." Like her children, Ms. Perez did not speak Spanish.

Reflecting the family's generally shared figured world, they often expressed negative assumptions about people from Mexico. In general, members of the family described Mexico as being less sophisticated, more rural, and poor. For example, Ms. Perez believed that the schools in Mexico were "smaller" and that teachers were "probably not as knowledgeable" and that they "don't have as many teachers to help with the children." In her mind, Mexican cities were also "smaller" and that the people were "more into their culture." Donaldo chimed in noting that most families were "more poor."

While family members identified themselves as being either Latino or Hispanic, they generally did not claim their Mexican roots, did not speak Spanish, and were rarely observed engaging in or talking about cultural practices related to their heritage. Examples of Latino/a culture were rare. In



first grade, Gabby demonstrated that she could count to ten in Spanish and once noted that she wanted her father to teach her to speak Spanish, but reported that this was unlikely now that he had a new girlfriend. Ms. Perez reported that while her youngest son does not speak Spanish that he liked to listen to the Spanish songs that his father played on the radio.

However, in the figured worlds of many people in the community, the family was considered Mexican and an accompanying set of negative assumptions were imposed on them. These positionings were exacerbated when the family relocated from a mid-sized university city that enjoyed a decidedly liberal reputation to a small formerly industrial city with few African American or Latino/a families. In this space, being Latino/a mattered significantly. As Ms. Perez reported, the people in Johnstown were the most “stuck up, snotty, arrogant people I’ve ever met in my life.” She noted, “I don’t see a lot of Black people. I don’t see a lot of Hispanics. Ummm, maybe I’ve seen twenty [in the 9 months since I lived here].” She added “I think they’re really racist down here. But you know, they’re not going to run me out.”

Ms. Perez’s concerns about the community extended to the school. “So, I mean even at the school, there are teachers that have talked to me in, in a way that I’ve never been talked to by ANY staff from a school.” As an example, Ms. Perez recounted a recent interaction she had at her son’s school. “The assistant principal calls him [her son Matthew] a ‘one-man walking disaster.’” Apparently the principal then made assumptions about Ms. Perez blaming her for her son’s difficulties. She recounted her response to the assistant principal:

‘You have no idea the type of person that I am.’ I said, ‘And as far as me being responsible for Matthew’s issues, Matthew’s been like that since he was three.’ I said ‘So you can’t say nothing to me.’ And I tried to keep calm with the people down here because people are quick to call the cops down here.

While Ms. Perez had never been in legal trouble before moving to Johnstown, in the first year they lived in that town both Ms. Perez and her eldest son had been arrested. In third grade, Gabby reported one the bad thing about living in Johnstown was the police. Ms. Perez described an altercation with her neighbor in which one of her neighbors accused one of Ms. Perez's sons of throwing eggs at his car and in retaliation egged Ms. Perez's house. Despite Ms. Perez being the person who called the police, her son got a ticket for trespassing. She reported that police would generally look at her and assume, "you're the bad one on this block." As she explained, "So you already have a target on your back." Ms. Perez was worried that if she continued to have to deal with the police she might be arrested and her children would end up in foster homes. Ironically, Ms. Perez reported that they "actually moved down here [to Johnstown] so I could get the boys away from, you know, everything that was going on in Shoreline."

### **The Intersection of Gender and Race for Gabby**

Race and gender have meanings that are read, enacted, denied, challenged, revisited, and imposed. This paper has provided a small glimpse into the ways these two dimensions of identity operate for one child and her family. By focusing on a young girl, we can consider the some of the factors that will contribute to identity construction over time. In particular, this analysis highlights the different degrees of negotiation allowed in relation to who people can claim to be and the stories that can tell about themselves. While Gabby's Tomboy role from ages 5 to 10 is generally recognized and accepted, the family's efforts to define themselves in terms of race, or to not define themselves in terms of race, are thwarted. As Holland and her colleagues might explain, their efforts to "tell people who they are" (p.3) are rejected by the shared figured world of the community that imposes

particular ways of being on Latino/a families. Gender and race are both significant, but they operate differently and have different effects.

Through this analysis, the roots of intersectionality become visible. While the ways Gabby and her family negotiate gender and race at this point in time is interesting, even more compelling is the knowledge that these negotiations will contribute to Gabby's future understandings of gender, race, and self as she grows older. In short, we begin to understand how identities are enacted within contested spaces where the figured worlds people bring – entailing the ways of being, acting, and interacting that are available to self and others – align and clash both presenting and restricting possibilities. All identity positionings are not equally available or malleable highlighting the inequality of difference and the weight of different positionings. In short, we see Gabby and her family as agential – choosing and acting, while also being acted upon. When viewed as longitudinal and cumulative processes, these ongoing negotiations around identity throughout childhood become particularly significant especially when we attempt to understand issues related to inequity and access to resources. Gabby is already learning significant lessons about who she is and who others assume her to be.

### **References**

- Collins, P. H. (1998). It's all in the family: Intersections of gender, race, and nation. *Hypatia*, 13(3), pp. 62-82.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). Gender, Black feminism, and Black political economy. *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, (March 2000) pp. 41-53.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, pp. 139-167.

- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), pp. 1241- 1299.
- Erikson, E. (1959). The problem of ego identity. *Psychological Issues*, 1(1), pp. 101-164.
- Flores-González, N. (2002). *School kids, street kids: Identity development in Latino students*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fulgini, A. J. (2001). A comparative longitudinal approach to acculturation among children from immigrant families. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 566–578.
- Gee, J.P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2000-2001). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25, 99-125.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of a spoiled identity*. New York: Simone and Schuster.
- Hawkins, M. (2005). Becoming a student: Identity work and academic literacies in early schooling. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(1), 59-80.
- Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- King, D.K. (1988). Multiple jeopardy, multiple consciousness: The context of a Black feminist ideology. *Signs*, 14(1), pp. 42-72.
- McCarthy, S., & Moje, E. B. (2002). Identity matters. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(2), 228-238.
- Mishler, E. (1999). *Storylines: Craftartists' narratives of identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moje, E. B., Ciechanowski, K. M., Ellis, L., Rosario, C., & Collazo, T. (2004). Working toward third space in content areas literacy: An examination of everyday funds of knowledge and discourse. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39(1), 38–70. DOI: [10.1598/RRQ.39.1.4](https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.39.1.4)

- Orellana, M. F., Reynolds, J., Dorner, L., & Meza, M. (2003). In other words: Translating or “para-phrasing” as a family literacy practice in immigrant households. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 38(1), 12–34.  
DOI: [10.1598/RRQ.38.1.2](https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.38.1.2)
- Reese, L., Garnier, H., Gallimore, R., & Goldenberg, C. (2000). Longitudinal analysis of the antecedents of emergent Spanish literacy and middle school English reading achievement of Spanish speaking students. *American Educational Researcher*, 37(3), 633–662.
- Reese, L., Kroesen, K., & Gallimore, R. (2000). Agency and school performance among urban Latino youth. In R. D. Taylor & M. C. Wang (Eds.), *Resilience across contexts: Family work, culture and community* (pp. 295–332), Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Rymes, B. (2001). *Conversational borderlands: Language and identity in an alternative, urban high school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

**Catherine Compton-Lilly** is Professor in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Contact Address:** Direct correspondence to Professor Compton-Lilly at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 456b Teacher Education Building, 225N Mills St, Madison, WI, 53706-1707, United States of America. E-mail address: [comptonlilly@wisc.edu](mailto:comptonlilly@wisc.edu)