

**IMPACTS OF RACIAL COMPOSITION AND SPACE ON RACIAL/ETHNIC
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FOR MEXICAN ORIGIN COLLEGE STUDENTS**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the racial/ethnic identity development, and the racialized experiences of Latino college students of Mexican origin. Furthermore, this dissertation advances research on Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) by comparing and contrasting HSIs with various student racial composition trends and a predominantly white institution (PWI). Current research on the marginalized experiences of Latino students at PWIs is clear that they continue to face interpersonal and structural forms of racism on campus. However, previous research on the experiences of Latinos attending HSIs are unclear about the benefits or challenges that Latinos face within those racialized spaces. This dissertation examines specifically how racialized space functions within HSIs of various racial compositions in the Southwest compared to a PWI that is an emerging HSI.

This dissertation finds that experiences of racism and/or discrimination vary by an institution's racial composition that has both negative and positive impacts on racial/ethnic identity development. The HSI in this dissertation with 80 percent Latinos in the student body offers the most institutional support for Latino students of Mexican origin and fosters an environment for racial/ethnic identity exploration, development, and celebration. However, there are several accounts of internalized racism between U.S. born and immigrant Latinos. Furthermore, participants from the HSI with 40 percent Latinos report interpersonal and structural forms of racism on campus similar to the experiences of Latino students at PWI. Students at this HSI also report similar feelings

of needing to hide or change their racial/ethnic identity when on campus, and are aware of limited opportunities to explore or celebrate their racial/ethnic identities. Overall, this dissertation finds that we should not homogenize HSIs in analyses. We need to continue investigating differences in experiences within racialized spaces at HSIs with various racial compositions. Furthermore, comparing these institutions by how long there has been a majority of Latinos in the student body is also important. The longer Latinos are the majority over whites in an institution, the more there is institutional support and programs for Latinos of Mexican origin. This support contributes to an overall more inclusionary campus racial climate, and thus more positive opportunities for racial/ethnic identity development.

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NOMENCLATURE

PWI	Predominantly White Institution
HSI	Hispanic Serving Institution
HBCU	Historically Black College and University

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates the racialized experiences of Latino and Latina college students at two types of institutions (predominantly white institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions). Overall, this dissertation extends research in Latino education, racial/ethnic identity development, and research on Hispanic Serving Institutions. This introductory chapter introduces this dissertation's major research questions and major areas of focus and contributions within sociology. Furthermore, this chapter explains why this dissertation study is necessary. For example, existing research on Latino and Latina's experiences in higher education includes both positive and negative experiences. Negative experiences include dealing with racism and discrimination that affect academic achievement, sense of belonging, retention, and the racial/ethnic identity development for Latino students overall. However, research findings are not always clear about the positive and negative experiences among Hispanic Serving Institutions compared with predominately white institutions.

Are Hispanic Serving Institutions better or not for the overall academic and social development of Latinos and Latinas compared with predominantly white institutions? The inability of existing research to answer this question led to this dissertation. Furthermore, research that analyzes how Latinos from different backgrounds face both similar and differing experiences in higher education depending on institution is also lacking. For example, Latinos are not a homogenous group. Thus,

this dissertation focuses only on Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin, but pays close attention to their various backgrounds in terms of generational status, citizenship status, phenotypes, English/Spanish speaking abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Each one of these factors shapes the experiences and the interpretation of those experiences for Latinos and Latinas in general. In this dissertation, a person of “Mexican origin” is defined as one who claims ancestry to Mexico through both parents or a single parent.

To begin with, this chapter introduces three important concepts that are central to understanding this dissertation. The first concept is “racialized space” (Barajas and Ronnkvist 2007; Feagin 1996; Mitchell, Wood, and Witherspoon 2010; Neely and Samura 2011; Tejada 2000). This dissertation contributes to the studies on Latinos in higher education by comparing racialized experiences within the spaces at Hispanic Serving Institutions and predominantly white institutions. I provide further definitions for these two types of institutions below. These two types of institutions can have differing racial compositions and racial climates, which contribute to differing racialized space. The racial demographics of a space, such as a university, and its history with servicing specific racial groups, can affect the racial climate (or environment) of a university campus. Research on predominantly white institutions shows how white students and faculty, as a dominant group, feel more represented, valued, and included compared with non-white students and faculty that experience marginalization instead. However, it is more than student and faculty numbers that affect racialized space and contribute to an overall racial climate. Racialized climate is especially shaped by student and faculty interactions within the space that destroy, reproduce, or create the racism or

discrimination. Thus, students, faculty, and staff from different racial backgrounds will experience the same racial climate differently. Critical Race Theory in education as well as developing theories on racialized space are used in this dissertation to analyze the experiences in Hispanic Serving Institutions and predominantly white institutions (discussed fully in Chapter II, Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review).

Another important concept in this dissertation is “framing”. A frame is a broad world view that creates meaning and social structure through a thinking process that shapes what people see or do not see in social settings (Feagin 2010b). A frame is so much more than a set of ideologies because a frame includes images, emotions, and narratives that have developed over centuries to not only explain social phenomena, but even shape how one feels towards it. Such frames assist in explaining and rationalizing social arrangements such as race, class, gender, etc. (Feagin 2010b). For example, the white racial frame includes rationalizations in the form of powerful emotions and narratives that justify and validate why collectively whites are the dominant group that deserves to be materially privileged at the expense of “subordinate” peoples of color that do not deserve full access and/or limited access to the same resources (Feagin 2010b). Other possible synonyms to understand the concept of framing are “world view,” “orientation,” or “paradigm”. The concept of “frame” and how it is specific to racial ideologies and uses sets of narratives, imagery, and even emotions is explained further in Chapter II. Overall, this dissertation not only looks at Latino and Latina college student experiences, but also how they interpret those experiences using frames that assist in navigating racialized space.

Finally, the third important concept central to this dissertation is racial/ ethnic identity. The phrase “racial/ethnic identity” acknowledges that Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin identify in racial terms, ethnic terms, and even in cultural, ancestral, linguistic, and phenotypic terms. This dissertation works from the theoretical framework (explained in Chapter II) that Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. are racialized, meaning they are perceived by the white mainstream largely in racial terms. Yet, this dissertation does not assume that all Latinos actually use a racial understanding to identify themselves. Nor does this dissertation attempt to impose categories of racial/ethnic identity by making students select from a set list of identity labels. Rather, this dissertation remains open-ended to allow students to explain their own construction of identity (explained further in Chapter III Data and Methodology). However, for clarity purposes, this dissertation continues to use the term racial/ethnic identity and refers to the population of interest as “Latinos and Latinas.”

Having introduced the three main concepts, this chapter continues with a general background on the state of higher education for Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. Afterwards, there is a brief history of predominantly white and Hispanic Serving Institutions in the U.S. Finally, this chapter concludes with an overview of the research questions and summarized objectives.

Hispanic Serving Institutions and Predominately White Institutions

A Hispanic Serving Institution, as defined by federal law, is an, “accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institution of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment”

(Laird et al. 2007). This definition is a qualifying definition so that institutions with enrollment of 25 percent full time Hispanic undergraduate can apply for federal funding. It was not until the creation of the Title V program in 1998 that the Higher Education Act (HEA) was reauthorized to provide a new funding stream specifically for Hispanic Serving Institutions (Benítez and Dearo 2004, 39). The Higher Education Act was originally signed in 1965 and has been reauthorized several times over the years. Its original purpose was to strengthen educational resources by allowing colleges and universities to apply for federal money. Once Hispanic Serving Institutions receive the Title V funding, how the funds are spent is at the discretion of the institution; funds do not necessarily have to be utilized towards programs or initiatives to help Latino and Latina students (Villalpando 2010, 245). Hispanic Serving Institutions have increased in number over the years due to Latino and Latina immigration and ongoing demographic changes related to U.S. births. This is why most Hispanic Serving Institutions are located in geographic areas where there is a large population of Latinos and Latinas (Laden 2001).

Furthermore, since the designation of "Hispanic Serving" is dependent on the demographics of the student body, and mostly about federal funding, a college or university does not need to have a mission statement or particular agenda in serving Latinos and Latinas. In fact, almost none of the campuses currently designated as Hispanic Serving have explicit missions to serve Latino and Latino students (Villalpando 2010, 244). The only exceptions are the National Hispanic University in California (closed in 2014), St Augustine's College in Illinois, Northern New Mexico College in

New Mexico, Boricua College in New York, and universities in Puerto Rico (Calderón Galdeano, Flores, and Moder 2012). Thus, Hispanic Serving Institutions are fundamentally very different from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities, which are created specifically to serve the needs of Black and Native American communities. It can be argued that all Hispanic Serving Institutions were originally predominantly white institutions that eventually became labeled as “Hispanic Serving Institutions” because of shifts in the student population. Thus, it is argued that very little change has occurred in the type of curriculum or structure of the institution as it transitions from a predominantly white institution to a Hispanic Serving Institution (Laird et al. 2007).

Nevertheless, even though research shows that Hispanic Serving Institutions represent a small percentage of higher education institutions, they actually served approximately 54 percent of all Latino and Latina students enrolled in higher education institutions in the academic year 2009-2010 (Medina and Posadas 2012). Some 800,000 of 1.5 million Latinos and Latinas enrolled in institutions of higher education attend Hispanic Serving Institutions. It is important to note that the majority of Latinos and Latinas in higher education attend two-year institutions; 500,000 of the 800,000 Latinos and Latinas enrolled in institutions of higher education are enrolled in Hispanic Serving Community colleges (Medina and Posadas 2012). . Thus, community colleges became Hispanic Serving Institutions to serve the growth of the Latino population in their areas since 60 percent of all Hispanic Serving community colleges are in Texas and

California, which are home to approximately 50 percent of the U.S. Latino and Latina population (Medina and Posadas 2012).

On the other hand, a predominantly white institution describes institutions of higher learning in two different ways. First, a predominantly white institution is an institution of higher learning where student enrollment is at least 50 percent white (Brown and Dancy 2010). And second, it is an institution recognized as historically supporting exclusion as supported by the U.S. prior to 1964 (Brown and Dancy 2010). The history of predominantly white institutions is tied to Hispanic Serving Institutions since almost all Hispanic Serving Institutions started as predominantly white institutions that changed because of regional racial demographic changes. The U.S. system of higher education is rooted in the establishment and development of predominantly white colleges; over time has had to face legal demands for gender and racial/ethnic inclusion. The prototype for American colleges came from universities in Western Europe such as Emmanuel College and Cambridge University, and in 1636, Harvard College was founded and became the model for colleges founded later in the U.S. (Brown and Dancy 2010). Higher education remained predominantly white and male until after the Civil War when social revisions and reforms for women and people of color fought for access to equal rights including access to higher education (Brown and Dancy 2010).

State of Latino Higher Education in the U.S.

Latinos and Latinas are a fast-growing part of U.S. population. Census estimates for 2050 predict that the Latino population (not including Puerto Rico) will be one quarter of the U.S. population, equivalent to about 103 million, an increase of 45 million

from 2007 population count (MacDonald and Carillo 2010). Despite this growth, Latinos and Latinas remain an oppressed group in the U.S. as they continue to face systemic racial and ethnic discrimination in several U.S. institutions. In fact, public media discourse in the U.S. tends to treat Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. as foreigners, which leads to further questioning of Latino and Latinas' rights including access to resources such as good housing, health care, and education. In the U.S. there is a clear hierarchy of racial groups where white Americans have historically placed themselves at the top of this hierarchy and created systems that continue to control resources such as access to quality education despite several reforms. Education in all its forms has served to reproduce a highly stratified society where white Americans as the dominant group in the U.S. use education to ensure their political and cultural hegemony and subordination of groups of color including Latinos and Latinas (Guadalupe San Miguel and Donato 2010, 27). Latinos and Latinas are a marginalized population in the U.S. and are thus treated so by mainstream institutions including the educational system (Guadalupe San Miguel and Donato 2010, 37).

At the same time, America's educational system is in crisis as it continues to fail its Latino and Latina students of all ages and generations. Scholars, who are aware of the young and fast growing population of Latinos, highlight how America can no longer afford to neglect the major issues facing the crisis in the educational system to provide quality education for all students. Increasing numbers of Latinos and Latinas in the U.S., and their continued status as an oppressed group with poor educational outcomes,

especially for those of Mexican origin, will bring heavy consequences for the U.S. if nothing is done to remedy the crises through education reform (Flores 2010, 211).

Demographically speaking, Latinos and Latinas are a growing population, and thus a very young population within the U.S. If the educational achievement levels among Latinos and Latinas does not change, stratification based on socioeconomic status in the U.S. will only be further solidified (Villalpando 2010, 232). While there has been improvement in Latino and Latina education since the 1960s, several issues of inequality remain (Guadalupe San Miguel and Donato 2010, 38). For example, prior to 1960, less than 5 percent of Latinos and Latinas were enrolled in institutions of higher education (Guadalupe San Miguel and Donato 2010, 38). Since then, college enrollment has steadily increased over the years, but Latinos and Latinas are still underrepresented in higher education and it is important to note that these increases are in mostly community colleges (Guadalupe San Miguel and Donato 2010, 38). Meanwhile, white students have been able to maintain a large portion of their enrollment in four year institutions rather than two year institutions (Villalpando 2010, 236). Furthermore, while it is true that Latino and Latina college enrollment is increasing, completion rates remain relatively stagnant for Latinos (Flores 2010, 212). Furthermore, even though there are more Latinos and Latinas compared to prior decades in higher education, their numbers are still in no way comparable to their national demographics.

The issues concerning the state of higher education for Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. are alarming. Thus, this dissertation contributes to the research on higher education experiences for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin to assist in finding solutions to

the crisis. The reasoning for focusing exclusively on those of Mexican origin, rather than Latinos as a whole, is to focus on the issues that are particularly relevant to Latinos of Mexico origin. Even though Latinos are treated as a homogenous group in the mainstream, the reality is that they are very diverse peoples with different cultures, histories, and experiences dealing with white hegemony in America. Furthermore, Latinos of Mexican origin are the largest group within the U.S., and within the “Latino/Hispanic” umbrella term. Census reports for 2010 state that people of Mexican origin represent 63 percent of the total Latino population in the U.S. (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011). In fact, Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin are the fastest growing also within the Latino group up from 58 percent in 2000 (Ennis et al. 2011).

Despite the fact that Latinos and Latinas make up the largest minority group in the U.S., the Department of Education does not report extensive data on important differences in characteristics of the Latino and Latina population (Villalpando 2010, 239). Yet, data collected by The PEW Hispanic Center and the Census Bureau, reveals that those of Cuban origin in the U.S. tend to have the highest levels of educational attainment than any other Latino group (Villalpando 2010, 239). When it comes to research on the educational pipeline for students of Mexican origin, estimates show that out of 100 students in elementary schools, only 46 graduate from high school, 8 graduate from college, 2 graduate from graduate school, and .2 graduate with a doctorate (Villalpando 2010, 239). Compared to white Americans we find that of 100 white students in elementary schools, 84 graduate from high school, 26 graduate from college,

10 graduate from graduate school, and 1.0 graduate with a doctorate degree (Villalpando 2010, 233).

Aware of the several issues related to Latino and Latina education, this dissertation investigates the relationship between racialized space and racial/ethnic identity formation for Latino and Latina students of Mexican origin in the context of predominantly white and Hispanic Serving Institutions. This study focuses primarily on how racial and ethnic identity is developed, utilized, and/or transformed. Education is about reproduction and contestation. Similarly, space is where identities and statuses are negotiated, contested, and constructed (Guadalupe San Miguel and Donato 2010, 44) . This being so, whites as the dominant group in the U.S. use their control in the educational process to eliminate cultural differences and promote the subordination of students of color and their cultures of origin (Guadalupe San Miguel and Donato 2010, 44). Yet, at the same time, students of color have adapted, modified, and challenged this system. This dissertation argues that looking at how racialized space and the experiences within those spaces shape, challenge, and transform identity can assist in improving the overall experience of higher education for Latinos and Latinas.

Why Look at Racialized Space and Racial/Ethnic Identity

For those who study education, we know that students' "sense of belonging" is closely related to the racial composition of the student population (Neely and Samura 2011). Several studies prove that students of color continue to experience racism in structural and interpersonal ways on college campuses (Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996; Laird et al. 2007; O'Neal 1998; Parks 2007; Solorzano and Bernal 1998; Solorzano and

Ceja 2014; Yosso et al. 2009). Furthermore, research highlights that, especially in predominantly white institutions, Latinos and Latinas experience isolation and alienation as there is a lack of “sense of belonging” and a feeling of being “different” from their surroundings (Leonardo 2000, 118). A large part of this experience is related to expectations that Latinos and Latinas implicitly and explicitly are urged to forget or move away from their “ethnic” identities and adopt seemingly “neutral” white social standards of behavior for the academy (Leonardo 2000, 118). Yet, at the same time, the development of a healthy outlook on racial/ethnic identity is a necessity for school success as well as for development into an adult. College undergraduates are at a crucial point in their overall identity development as they are still partially using the frames of their parents while starting to think about themselves through their own experiences (Torres 2004).

Chapter II, Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review, indicates that there is mixed evidence as to whether Hispanic Serving Institutions create a positive environment or a potentially stressful environment similar to that reported at predominately white institutions. I argue that the ambiguity in the research results from the lack of distinction between Hispanic Serving Institutions that barely make the 25 percent threshold compared with those that have a student population that is 50 percent or even 80 percent Latino. Furthermore, it is important to note and compare Hispanic Serving Institutions based on how many years they have had a Latino majority. This dissertation study contributes to the current literature on Hispanic Serving Institutions and Latino and Latina education by highlighting the importance of these differences in

institutions even though by federal definition, all are considered Hispanic Serving Institutions. This is a call to those in Latino and Latina education studies interested in studying Hispanic Serving Institutions to do the same and help create clearer data for interpretations about the positives or drawbacks of Hispanic Serving Institutions for Latino and Latina students of all backgrounds.

Finally, it is important to understand the frames that Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin use to interpret concepts such as racism, discrimination, race, and ethnicity, since racial frames are used to interpret and even talk about their experiences. The dominant frame of the U.S. mainstream is white centered and “Colorblind.” Colorblindness and other mainstream views of racism perpetuate the idea that we are now in a post-racial society where racism can be attributed only to the acts of the random bigoted person rather than to systemic or institutional forms of racism that “died” after the Civil Rights movements. The entire language of colorblind racism continues to hide racial inequality and the role of the white actors who continue to benefit from the current racial system. Yet, there are counter frames and critical theories that challenge colorblind racism. These counter frames come from Americans of color to counter dominant racial framing (discussed in Chapter II). People of color in America can be influenced and adopt language or even beliefs from the dominant colorblind frame. Understanding how Latino and Latina college students of this generation use frames to interpret experiences of racism has major implications for researchers and administrators eager to find ways to improve the experience of higher education for Latino and Latina students of all backgrounds.

Study Guidelines

The overall main contributions of this dissertation include discerning the frameworks that Latino and Latina college students of Mexican origin use to describe and understand their university's racialized surroundings; comparing and contrasting the experiences of Latino and Latina students at the three different types of institutions and racial contexts; and highlighting how the Latino and Latina students perceive racialized space and how it affects their racial/ethnic identity. Specifically, this study addresses gaps in the research on the experiences of Latinos and Latinas in higher education by comparing university experiences of Latinos and Latinas at Hispanic Serving Institutions with differing racial compositions with predominantly white institutions. Comparisons will assist in understanding the complex relationship between race and space, framing, and its relationship to racial identity for Latino and Latina students of Mexican origin.

The following questions served as guidelines for this dissertation's design, implementation, and analyses.

Guiding research questions include:

- 1) How do Latino students of Mexican origin understand and explain racism/discrimination they may encounter on campus? How does this relate to their identity orientation?
- 2) How are the expectations of acculturation or pressures of assimilation filtered through a racially tinted lens? Is assimilation seen as an adaptive strategy and if so, to what extent does this impact the formation of identity?

- 3) How does the overall racial environment produce, reproduce, or destroy racial stereotypes related to the racial hierarchy?
- 4) What are some of the tactics that students utilize to emphasize or deemphasize a particular racial or ethnic identity that is imposed on them that does not agree with their self-claimed racial or ethnic identity?

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter covers research and theories that this dissertation builds upon and uses as a guide. This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part discusses theory behind racial/ethnic identity development and the many ways Latinos and Latinas conceptualize and utilize racial/ethnic identity. This research suggests that Latino and Latina's racial/ethnic identity is fluid and varies across a lifetime and across context. Furthermore, the first part of this chapter also highlights the importance of using theory to analyze racial/ethnic identity as a process from an internal-personal level and from an external societal level. The second part of this chapter discusses recent empirical findings related to Latino and Latina racialized experiences in higher education. This research highlights how the racial composition of a university and the experiences of racism and discrimination affect Latino and Latina students' sense of belonging and their racial/ethnic identity development while attending predominantly white universities compared with Hispanic Serving Institutions.

The third part lays out the theoretical frameworks this dissertation study uses to understand how experiences of racism and discrimination still function in systemic and institutional ways as well as theoretical frameworks that define, create, destroy, and maintain hierarchies related to race and space within a university. This final section also lays out theory on other frames and ideologies used to explain race and racism used in

contemporary America. This chapter concludes by laying out the main hypotheses based on the findings of previous studies and the theoretical development this dissertation helps develop.

Research and Guiding Theory on Latino and Latina Racial/Ethnic Identity

Research demonstrates how the nature of any “identity” is complex. Thus, this dissertation study uses several theories on identity to help grasp these complexities. To begin with, “identity” is understood as a process--not something that anyone poses, but rather something someone does (Jenkins 2014, 6). Therefore, to some extent individuals are always trying to convince others that they are one identity and not the other. Part of the complexity of “identity” is that “identity” and therefore the process of “identification” are not only internal questions one asks oneself, but are also linked to societal meanings and histories. Peter Burke explains theoretically why there is a need to make a link between the social structure and identity. Burke states that “identities and the social structure are two sides of the same coin” since “the self must be understood as bound to the larger social arena as opposed to being isolated set of identities” (Burke 2004, 5). Identity control theory holds that identities are a set of meanings people hold for themselves that also define what it means to be “x” along with standards that serve as a reference point people use to compare their perceptions (Burke 2004). Furthermore, groups with power in the social structure influence and define not only what the categories are, but also the standards for the categories. However, at the same time, those who are not in positions of power can and do contest these categories and standards.

Therefore, when we study race or ethnicity functioning as an identity, we must consider how those racial/ethnic categories or labels are also part of race relations complete with meanings and histories. Furthermore, we must understand the role of power in identity, not just in the creation, destruction, and transformation of categories, but also in controlling which categories are available to whom, when, and where. Traditionally, identity theorists such as Goffman recognized that it is not enough for individuals to assert an identity for themselves, this identity must be validated by others. He explains why impression management and the strategies to assert that identity show the performativity aspects of identity. The power aspect is played out in the fact that while people may have some control over (some) of the signals they are giving about themselves, they are always at a disadvantage by not being able to ensure that the other person is getting the correct perception, or how those impressions are being received (Jenkins 2014, 44). While this is true, even considering the dynamics of race relations in an inter-personal exchange, Burk also reminds us that *power* plays a role at a much larger level of society interaction.

This dissertation goes a step further to look at racial/ethnic identity not just from the traditional interpersonal level, but also from a structural level. Every single racial and ethnic category used in the U.S. has a history where various groups have fought to create, control, transform, or even abolish certain racial and ethnic categories. It is argued that as a group, white European Americans have had the greatest control in defining both “white” and “not white,” or “other” (Lopez 2006). Collectively, white European Americans have also had the power to control resources such as citizenship,

safe housing, quality schooling, good health care and so forth based off racial categories for centuries in the U.S. (Lopez 2006). Yet, other racial groups have opposed, transformed, and even created new racial and ethnic categories for themselves. After all, it is within institutions that “identification is often a matter of imposition and resistance, claim and counter-claim, rather than a consensual process of mutuality and negotiation” (Jenkins 2014, 97).

Therefore, this dissertation analyzes racial/ethnic identity through the understanding that racial/ethnic identity is not only shaped by power relations within an interpersonal context, but also in larger, structural ways that are external to individuals. This makes racial/ethnic identity also fluid across time and space as the definitions and standards keep changing historically and across regions. Identity theory already underlines that identities are a continuous process and are fluid rather than a static state of an individual (Burk 1991). That is, identities have been found to not only change across a life path, but also from moment to moment depending on audience or even context. This is very much the way Latino and Latina racial/ethnic identity has been shown to function. But it is also important to remember the history of each racial and ethnic category and how those meanings have been shaped by both whites and people of color and continue to shape the access to resources in the U.S.

Thus, early identity theories still serve as guides even though they originally did not focus on racial/ethnic identity or even Latinos. The process of “identity” and “identification” for various identities still functions in similar ways when we think of racial/ethnic identity. By understanding how racial/ethnic identities function as a social

phenomenon in the lives of people of color, we can further add nuances to fundamental theories on “identity” and “identification.” For example, Goffman especially focuses on how individuals negotiate their identities through interactions with others and to some extent are always seeking acceptance from others through the image of themselves that they present. Goffman speaks of “impression management” which is “the interactional competences that ‘send’ particular identities to others and attempt to influence their reception” (Jenkins 2014, 95). Ways in which individuals seek to influence their reception include through dramatic style and ability, misrepresentation, expressive control, and identifying with collectively already defined roles (Jenkins 2014, 95). Furthermore, identity management works with a backstage and a front stage. In the backstage, individuals can be free to “be themselves” without judgment and rehearse their presentation of an identity they want to carry out in public (Jenkins 2014, 95).

Dowling’s recent research highlights how Latinos and Latinas practice identity management by using racial/ethnic labels depending on context or situation. Other work that has explored labeling preferences among Latinos, especially how those labels are employed, includes Ochoa (2004), Rodriguez (2000), Oboler (1995), and Golash Boza (2006, 2008). However, Dowling’s is the most recent research that focuses on several key points. For example, she looks at the relationships between racial ideologies and the language that individuals use when talking about their identities as well as how identities shift in specific contexts depending on to whom they are speaking and interacting. Dowling uses qualitative methods to interview immigrants and U.S.-born Latinos in Texas about labels they prefer to use in their day-to-day lives versus the census.

Dowling's study also gathers additional data that focus on the meaning of each of the following common racial/ethnic labels and the context in which the labels are used: "Mexican," "*Mexicano*," "Mexican American," "Chicano," "Hispanic," "Latino," and "Tejano."

Dowling's overall study is important to this dissertation study's interested in how context, including racialized space, has influenced the racial/ethnic identity development of Latinos and Latinas. Other findings in Dowling's study include: (1) Mexican American respondents (especially the lighter skinned) did not use the word "Mexican" as a primary identifier often as it implies being in alliance with Mexican immigrants and assumes one is an immigrant oneself (Dowling 2014, 107). (2) Mexican immigrants also do the same kind of distancing, using "*Mexicanos*" to refer only to immigrants or someone specifically born in Mexico (Dowling 2014, 107). (3) Mexican Americans specifically choose to identify themselves as "Hispanic" to distinguish themselves from immigrants. "Hispanic" is used to mark oneself as being from the U.S. (Dowling 2014, 111). (4) "Latino," according to Mexican Americans, describes someone not from the U.S. or of Mexican origin, but is associated with famous people on television (Dowling 2014, 111, 113). Finally, (5) "Chicano" is perceived as negative and is associated with race-based, civil rights organizing, and anti-assimilation mentalities (Dowling 2014, 31). Dowling's findings highlight how racial/ethnic identity labels are connected to a greater social structure in which the meanings of each of these labels are not only defined by Latinos themselves, but also by a mainstream America that is heavily influenced by affluent whites' imagery and stereotypes about Latinos.

Dowling's findings proved important to this dissertation study, which produced similar but also differing findings. These are discussed in Chapter IV, Identity Management. Overall, this dissertation study uses identity theory and research from a variety of disciplines as guides for the interpretation of Latino and Latina racial/ethnic identity. The following sections cover the research and theoretical background related to racial/ethnic identity that this dissertation study also takes into consideration in the data analysis.

Latinos Racial/Ethnic Identity Patterns Differ Based on Demographics

Demographic studies show various patterns in the ways Latinos and Latinas racially/ethnically self-identify based on background characters such as socioeconomic status, generational status, Spanish and English speaking capabilities, national origin group, and even skin tone. Most demographic studies use survey data in their analyses and are immensely useful in studying these patterns across wide geographical locations. Surveys at the national level, such as the U.S. Census, have also contributed to shaping how racial/ethnic identity is measured. For example, in the 1980s, the U.S. Census first formally conceptualize persons of "Spanish/Hispanic origin or decent" in ethnic terms as it was an identification question separate from the race question, and first switched to self-reported identification rather than having census takers make the racial determinations (Lopez 2005). This resulted in a large increase in the numbers of persons selecting the "other race" category, which has come to be associated as a Latino phenomenon since almost all persons selecting "other race" also mark the "Hispanic" ethnicity (Lopez 2005).

Additionally, demographic and quantitative analyses on the U.S. Latino population reveal several important findings related to the “other race” phenomena. For example, studies find that Latina and Latino groups will identify as “some other race” rather than “white” depending on background origin, skin tone, language preference, SES, and experiences of discrimination. Analyzing respondents of the National Latino Survey and the Latino National Political Survey, Golash-Boza and Darity found that respondents who were bilingual or did not speak Spanish were more likely to self-identify as “some other race” rather than “white” (2008). Respondents reporting having darker skin tones were more likely to identify as “Black” or “other race” compared with “white,” and those Latinas and Latinos who claimed to have experienced discrimination were also less likely to claim “white” as a racial identity (Golash-Boza and William Darity 2008).

The Pew Hispanic Center (PEW) conducted an analysis of 2000 Census micro data and PEW data also looking at why some Latinas and Latino choose “some other race” versus “white.” PEW finds that those who identify themselves as “white” have higher levels of education and income, that most foreign born Latinos (except for Cubans) are more likely to say “other race,” and that those who attained or were born with U.S. citizenship are also more likely to identify themselves as “white” (Tafoya 2004). This leads to the conclusion that Latinos see race as a measure of “belonging” to the U.S.; whiteness is a measure of inclusion, or perceived inclusion, into the U.S. and what it means to be “American” (Tafoya 2004). When it comes to Latinas and Latinos choosing a hyphenated identity or a pan-ethnic identity versus a non-hyphenated identity

(Mexican-American or Latino/Hispanic vs. American) Latinas and Latinos who have experienced discrimination are more likely to choose a pan-ethnic or hyphenated identity because discrimination teaches Latinas and Latinos that they are not “unhyphenated Americans” (Golash-Boza 2006).

Experiences of Racism and Discrimination Affecting Racial/ ethnic Identity

This section covers studies that directly focus on how experiences of discrimination and/or racism either strengthened or weakened a Latino or Latinas sense of racial/ethnic identity. This dissertation points to how racial/ethnic identity is not usually considered when thinking about the college development. Yet, research for Black students at HBCUs shows that there is an important psychological factor in being able to participate and learn about one’s own culture and thoughts related to your background of origin. In many ways, research has shown that racial/ethnic identity is more important to people of color than it is to whites. Furthermore, this dissertation goes forth from this research that shows how Latinos and Latinas also can have racist or discriminatory experiences in college (especially at predominantly white universities). An important question to ask is, what are the experiences in going through a key age in identity development in an environment that is either hostile and/or unwelcoming?

Another study by Castillo et al. shows that an already strong ethnic identity makes Latino and Latina students more sensitive to discrimination and negative perceptions (2005). Using survey data from 180 Latino and Latina undergraduates at a predominantly white university, this study found that Mexican Americans who reported a greater ethnic loyalty (strong ethnic identity) are more likely to sense discrimination

and any negative perceptions towards their groups (Castillo et al. 2005). This is largely because of the fact that students with high ethnic loyalty are more likely to want to participate in Latino culture and thus perceive the university environment as more negative because of the conflict between Latino culture and the university's predominately white culture (Castillo et al. 2005). Other findings show that Latino students who report feeling very strongly about their racial/ethnic identity despite the negative context of the campus climate have to find alternative spaces to develop their ethnic identity with like-minded peers (Maramba and Velasquez 2010). Yosso et al. also finds that Latino and Latina students seek isolated safe spaces with friends or instructors who could share in their culture within predominantly white campus climates that do not feel welcoming (Yosso et al. 2009).

These types of findings have led some researchers (including those in administration) to conclude that high ethnic identity may lead to lower college adjustment and thus make it more likely that students will drop out (Castillo et al. 2005). "College adjustment" is another topic often found in administrative research that is not critical of the white European design of higher education that calls for white social norms. "College adjustment" literature is also not critical of the hostile white space to which Latino and Latina students find they must adjust. Overall, Latino and Latina students have various levels of acculturation or experience dealing with the expectations of white institutions, and thus some find it easier to "adjust" to college social norms. "College adjustment" really means Latinos' and Latinas' ability to

acculturate, and it is their culture or strong racial/ethnic identity that impedes their success in college.

Even though researchers focusing on “college adjustment” are not critical of the expectations and assumptions of acculturation that Latino and Latina students face, they do demonstrate that not all Latinos and Latinas come from similar backgrounds and thus perceive certain racial environments differently. Vasti Torres’s research shows how the racial composition of a student’s background, that is, whether the student comes from a predominantly white or Latino neighborhood or high school, affects the student’s adjustment and perception of college environment (Torres 2003, 2004). Torres finds that parents still greatly influence racial/ethnic self-identification for first-year Latino students (except for those living on the border) (Torres 2004). For the Latino and Latina students living on the border, it was important to use a label that distinguished between those who were born in the U.S. and those who had lived in Mexico (Torres 2004). Even students who were born in the U.S. and tended to use the term Hispanic used some way to indicate that they were from the U.S., not Mexico (Torres 2004) This was the case even though they claimed Mexican culture of origin (Torres 2004). Torres states that Latino and Latina students in the border regions, despite being the cultural majority, were still burdened with the stereotypes and felt that they had to prove their right to belong in the U.S. (Torres 2004).

Language and generational status also play a role in how students self-identify in Torres’s studies. Differences related to language and generational status are related to the level of parents’ acculturation. Torres finds that students with more acculturated

parents tend to have a more “bicultural orientation” (Torres 2004). “Bicultural orientation” is a scale Torres developed that allows students to identify to what extent they see themselves operating within either white American culture or Mexican culture on a daily basis. While some of those in Torres’ study were first-generation students who had acculturated parents (usually living in areas where whites are the majority), most students with more acculturated parents were the second and third generations. Among these students, there is still variation among those who grew up in monocultural environments such as enclaves or in Latino-majority cities. Additionally, almost all the students faced stresses, although this was especially the case for the first generation and those Latinas who struggled balancing cultural expectations regarding gender norms and family obligations (Torres 2003, 2004) . Torres’s studies are important because they are recent and they cover a wide range of issues faced by Latino and Latina students in higher education. Torres’ approach, however, is from an administrative background. And even though these studies are conducted across several institutions, Torres does not distinguish which findings come from predominantly white institutions or Hispanic Serving Institutions.

All the studies mentioned in this section highlight the importance of developing further research that looks at how racial/ethnic identity development occurs for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin in college. However, these studies also must consider that not all Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin come from the same background and thus will have different experiences in their racial/ethnic identity development. The studies above only begin to discuss how racialized space, and the experiences in such space,

shape racial/ethnic identity. Much more work needs to be done to better understand how identity development occurs in relation to space and differing racial compositions. This is particularly important because research has shown that Latino and Latina students' perceptions of the environment, and how comfortable they feel, affects their performance as well as their plans/desires to remain in college (Gloria et al. 2005; Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler 1996; Hurtado and Carter 1997). If improvements are to be made in Latino and Latina students' experiences in higher education, the institution's impact on racial/ethnic identity development and how the institution impedes or assists with the process in a positive manner must be taken seriously.

Research and Guiding Theory on Latino Experiences in Higher Education

Research on education using a critical race perspective highlights how students of color continue to face racism and discrimination in higher education (Feagin et al. 1996; Laird et al. 2007; O'Neal 1998; Parks 2007; Solorzano and Bernal 1998; Solorzano and Ceja 2014; Yosso et al. 2009). This racism appears both at the institutional level and the interpersonal level. This section covers research that looks at the differences and similarities for Latinos and Latinas at predominantly white institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Recall that the lack of clarity within research on experiences at Hispanic Serving Institutions led to this dissertation study. Thus, this section begins to explain the research on experiences at predominantly white intuitions, then the research on Hispanic Serving Institutions.

In predominantly white institutions, one of the most common experiences students of color report is dealing with racial assaults, otherwise known as

“microaggressions” (Yosso et al. 2009) or racism at the interpersonal level. Racism at the interpersonal level refers to subtle, preconscious, or even unconscious degradations usually of a verbal nature that may seem harmless. However, research shows that the accumulative nature of interpersonal racist acts contribute to stress and diminished morality (Pierce, 1995, 281; Yosso et al., 2009). Facing interpersonal forms of racism daily creates chronic stress because of the need to constantly interpret the insults and decide on ways to react to the insults (Yosso et al. 2009). Yosso et al. analyze the experiences of Latino undergraduates at predominantly white institutions. In this work, researchers find that racial joking, and being the target of the jokes, is the most common racial aggression that students of color face at the interpersonal level (Yosso et al. 2009). Racial joking has been identified as part of white campus subculture, and regardless of white students’ intentions in telling the jokes, racial joking leads to stressful situations in which Latino and Latina students’ efforts to find a sense of belonging to campus life are hindered (Yosso et al. 2009).

Another common experience reported by students of color at predominantly white institutions is alienation or isolation related to constant reminders through interpersonal-level racism. These reminders hint that students of color do not belong in the white university space-- that their non-white presence at the university is somehow out of place (Yosso et al. 2009). Some Latinos and Latinas choose isolation as a self-protective response to the uncomfortable and perceived unwelcoming environment (Gloria and Castellanos 2003). Choosing isolation as a protective response has been interpreted as evidence of feelings of powerlessness and normlessness (Gloria and

Castellanos 2003, 78).¹ In this “isolation” Latinos and Latinas create secluded spaces or have small enclaves they create with friends or instructors that serve as “safe” spaces where they feel comfortable to speak Spanish, listen to Spanish music, or share other cultural practices (Yosso et al. 2009). Overall, the consensus is that the racial environments at predominantly white institutions create challenges for some of their Latino and Latina students who struggle to find their place and feel comfortable practicing their culture within an environment perceived as hostile or just unwelcoming.

Do Latinos and Latinas face similar feelings and experiences with racism at an interpersonal level at Hispanic Serving Institutions? Would the assumed difference in racial demographics at Hispanic Serving Institutions compared with predominantly white institutions change the overall campus racial climate? The empirical evidence clearly shows how the racial climates of predominately white institutions pose several potential obstacles to students of color, but the evidence for Hispanic Serving Institutions is unclear. Research focusing on Hispanic Serving Institutions’ racialized climates and the effect of such climates on Latino and Latina students is contradictory compared with similar research that focuses on Black students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the U.S. versus predominately white institutions (Van Camp, Barden, and Sloan 2009; Chambers et al. 1998; Feagin et al. 1996; Feagin 1996; Laird et al. 2007; Parks 2007; Spurgeon and Myers 2008; Steinfeldt, Reed, and Clint Steinfeldt 2009).

Thus far, research shows that Black students attending HBCUs tend to not only identify more within nationalistic terms, but also tend to do better academically (Laird et

al. 2007; Spurgeon and Myers 2008). They also report fewer experiences of overt racism, social isolation, alienation, or overall personal dissatisfaction compared with Black students at predominantly white institutions (Laird et al. 2007; Spurgeon and Myers 2008). A study by Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) explains that the racial integration of Black students at predominantly white institutions has failed. Even though those institutions are designed with a one-way integration process for Black students to adopt white views, practices, and norms, because Black students experience high levels of racism and discrimination overall in a hostile campus environment, they feel isolated and uncomfortable (Feagin et al. 1996). Research on HBCUs shows how these institutions can better serve Black students by their ability to provide spaces for these students' psychosocial development as well as their educational success, benefits that are not found for all Black students at predominantly white institutions.

Yet, it is difficult to predict the presence or absence of similar experiences for Latinos and Latinas at Hispanic Serving Institutions. The research that looks at similar costs and benefits of attending a Hispanic Serving Institution needs to be further developed since there are many inconsistent findings that I argue result from the lack of clear distinctions between Hispanic Serving Institutions. For example, Hispanic Serving Institutions with only 25 percent Latino population should not be grouped together with Hispanic Serving Institutions with 60 percent or more Latino students. Additionally, the length of time that an institution has had a majority Latino and Latina population is also important but not addressed in the research. Remember that Hispanic Serving Institutions are defined by federal law as "accredited and degree-granting public or

private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment” (Laird, Williams and Bridges 2007). An “emerging HSI is defined as having 15-24 percent of Latino students enrolled, and a non-HSI enrolls fewer than 15 percent of Latino students (Garcia 2013). The designation of Hispanic Serving Institution is only a matter of numbers. Schools can apply for the designation to gain extra federal funds based on the percentage of Latinos in the student population, but this does not mean that the institution is really committed to or has any mission statement dedicated specifically to Latino and Latina education (see Chapter I Introduction). But even the research on Hispanic Serving Institutions does not make distinctions between these types of institutions that have wide ranges of racial compositions.

For example, one study by Laird et al. (2007) compared the experiences of Black students at HBCs and predominantly white universities with the experiences of Latinos at Hispanic Serving Institutions and predominantly white institutions. Using quantitative analyses, Laird et al. determined that Black students at HBCs did far better academically and socially compared with Black students at predominantly white institutions and Latinos at both Hispanic Serving Institutions and predominantly white institutions. In other words, this analysis found no proof that Latino college students did better either academically or socially at predominantly white institutions versus at Hispanic Serving Institutions or vice versa (Laird et al. 2007). The explanation offered by Laird et al. is that HBCs are created specifically for the needs of Black Americans, while all Hispanic Serving Institutions are originally predominantly white institutions that eventually

became “Hispanic Serving Institutions” because of shifts in the student population (Laird et al. 2007). Thus, receiving a designation of “Hispanic Serving Institution” brought very little change in the institution’s structure or educational curriculum (Laird et al. 2007). Because Hispanic Serving Institutions are not required to have a mission statement or particular agenda in serving their Latino populations to receive federal funding,, these institutions are fundamentally quite different from HBCUs, whose academics and social environment are based on mission statements that affirm a dedication to Black students.

Similar findings come from a report made from a New Mexico State University symposium. At this symposium Latino and Latina students discussed issues about campus climate, mentors, cultural challenges, retention, experiences as first-generation college students, and their overall feeling about the quality and quantity of Latino-related cultural events and activities. The report discloses that Latinos and Latinas at New Mexico State University felt the institution could do a much better job providing Latino cultural events and activities (Medina and Posadas 2012). The report suggests that Latino and Latina students attending Hispanic Serving Institutions face challenges related to the absence of satisfactory cultural outlets that are similar to those faced by students not in an Hispanic Serving Institution (Medina and Posadas 2012). This symposium report focuses on challenges that could be categorized at the institutional level rather than reporting on interpersonal racism. There is very little research that looks at the presence or absence of racism at the interpersonal level at Hispanic Serving Institutions specifically.

Another study by Rodriguez et al. interested in minority-status stress and acculturative stress interviewed 338 Latino and Latina participants (228 Mexican Americans) to investigate if the increased presence of students color offset minority-status stress and acculturative stress. Results suggested that Latino and Latina students still face typical college demands but also those specifically resulting from being Latino even though they were the majority (Rodriguez et al. 2000). In fact, the students faced acculturative stresses, but not minority stress, meaning that their stress resulted from a cultural background and posed a significant risk of Latino college student maladjustment (Rodriguez et al. 2000). Even though it is not clear if this study looked at Hispanic Serving Institutions, it is evidence that racial climates with majority Latinos do make some difference. But, is this due to fewer interpersonal experiences with racism?

Both studies by Medina and Posadas, and Rodriguez et al. point to institutional level issues or challenges that Latinos and Latinas faced at Hispanic Serving Institutions (majority Latino racial climates). However, it is not clear if experiencing interpersonal racism on campus can be ruled out completely since there are so few studies that look at the experiences at Hispanic Serving Institutions, and even fewer that compared them with predominantly white institutions. Even when Hispanic Serving Institutions are compared with predominantly white institutions, the Latino population may be far less than a majority. For example, one in-depth dissertation study that interviewed Latinos and Latinas at universities in the U.S., including Hispanic Serving Institutions, found that Latinos and Latinas at the Hispanic Serving Institutions reported experiencing both institutional and interpersonal racism (Parks 2007). However, the student population at

the Hispanic Serving Institution in Park's study is about 35 percent Latino and 46 percent white. This still leaves questions about institutions that have a majority of Latinos present, making their racial/ethnic climate more directly comparable to that of HBCUs. This dissertation hypothesizes that Latinos and Latinas at those Hispanic Serving Institutions that have had a clear Latino majority over many years may still face institutional racism, but they face much less interpersonal level racism compared with those at Hispanic Serving Institutions where Latinos are not the majority.

Another study by Guardia and Evans looks into a Latino Fraternity at an Hispanic Serving Institution that is 54 percent Hispanic. They find that the Hispanic Serving Institution's campus embraced and promoted Latino and Latina culture through fast food options and nightly salsa dancing classes (2008). Additionally, the students also reported being aware of Spanish-speaking faculty and staff members (Guardia and Evans 2008). Overall, the authors concluded that attending the Hispanic Serving Institution enhanced the students' ethnic identity beyond the contributions of the fraternity as the students reported realizing that the university catered to the Latino and Latina community (Guardia and Evans 2008). This study highlights the importance of a university being supportive and active in developing outlets for its Latino and Latina students at the institutional level. Creating and supporting cultural organizations, activities, or cultural practices allows Latino students to feel comfortable using those outlets to practice their culture and explore their ethnic and racial identities (Benítez and Dearo 2004; Laden 2001). This is very similar to what a HBCU does for its Black students, and thus it can be assumed that Hispanic Serving Institutions with a Latino

student population of 50 percent or more would be able to create spaces that foster welcoming environments.

However, welcoming, supportive environments involve more than numbers. The strength of the institution's commitment to diversity must also be considered. Yosso et al.'s investigation of campus racial climate compared predominantly white institutions that endorse diversity of convenience, which the authors claim is the type of diversity most often endorsed by universities, with genuine interest in diversifying student, staff, and faculty populations (Yosso et al. 2009). An institution's intentions or level of commitment to diversity can be difficult to assess, especially since universities use colorblind racism (discussed further later in this chapter) or race-neutral politics when promoting diversity (Yosso et al. 2009). Although predominantly white institutions may portray a front of promoting diversity through recruitment brochures, they do not necessarily commit to providing equal opportunities for students of color to feel welcomed (Yosso et al. 2009). Referring back to Derrick Bell's concept of interest convergence, it can be argued that diversity of convenience is really about better serving white students and allows students of color to benefit from institutions only to the extent that it is convenient for whites (Bell 2004; Yosso et al. 2009).

A study that looked at how well universities are prepared for the projected influx of Latino student enrollment in the near future found that the majority of the institutions did not acknowledge the large Latino populations around them (Torres and Zerquera 2012). Additionally, content analysis of the universities' websites and mission statements found that these universities addressed race or ethnicity only generically or in

broad terms; there was no evidence of programs to serve the underrepresented student populations (Torres and Zerquera 2012). This finding provides further support to claims that many Hispanic Serving Institutions were once predominantly white institutions and do not change their mission or incorporate many program or curriculum changes to better serve Latino students. This highlights the importance of differentiating between Hispanic Serving Institutions not only by the size of the Latino majority but also by the number of years Latinos have been the majority population. This dissertation also hypothesizes that the longer an institution has a majority Latino population, the more likely it will have missions statements that reflect the needs of the Latino community, such as including programs for first-generational college students and providing more support and promotion for Latino cultural events and organizations on campus.

Overall, the question yet to be answered is whether the racial composition of a university, especially if it is predominantly Latino, leads to fewer experiences of interpersonal or even institutional racism for Latino and Latina students. Existing research from an administrative focus looks at Hispanic Serving Institutions in terms of their ability to retain Latino students and help students with academic success (Arana et al. 2011; Benítez and Dearo 2004). However, as shown above, the psychosocial development, including that of racial/ethnic identity, for Latino and Latinas students based on campus environment needs to be further researched in a way that is critical and that makes clear distinctions between the institutions included in the samples. The study of Hispanic Serving Institutions, especially those with a majority of Latinos and policies and programs created to specifically address the issues of Latino and Latina students, is

especially important to consider and deserves further study in comparison with predominately white institutions. The current literature relating to the racial composition of universities often lacks clarity and is in many ways underdeveloped. This dissertation adds to this literature to better understand the roles of universities' racial composition and its effects on racialized space. It will then link racial composition to the experiences of Latino and Latina students of Mexican origin and how they perceive that it impacts their racial/ethnic identity development.

Guiding Theories Relevant to This Dissertation's Analyses

This dissertation study uses several theoretical frames to analyze the literature and the data collected. These theories include Critical Race Theory in education, Institutional Racism, Systemic Racism, various theories on racialized space, and theories on frames and ideologies about racism (white racial frame, colorblind racism, and counter framing). Each of these is explained in its own section below, in order as listed above.

In light of the findings on Latino and Latina college experiences (especially at predominantly white institutions), this dissertation takes a Critical Race Theory approach toward Education as well as several related theoretical frames including Institutional Racism and Systemic Racism (discussed below). A university or college, and the American education system overall, can be analyzed both as institutions and as part of a system of institutions in the U.S. in which whites as the dominant group continue to control access to quality education and maintain overall patterns of oppression in the

U.S.(Blauner 1972). Critical Race Theory in education builds on several theories about institutional racism.

Several institutional racism theorists have applied this theory to the U.S. educational system. For example, Robert Blauner explains how the Western European tradition of education as an institution uses taken-for-granted assumptions that European knowledge is the primary or legitimate knowledge and thus leads to the ignoring, or racist exclusion, of ways of knowing from non-European knowledge sources (Blauner 1972, 190). Additionally, Blauner notes how job discrimination that results in low income for people of color relegates them to poor neighborhoods that lack transportation or other public services and result in blocked educational opportunities for children of color (Blauner 1972, 185). Similarly, Feagin and Feagin explain how even though overt forms of discrimination (such as racial segregation) in elementary and secondary education are no longer in place, subtle forms of discrimination are employed to keep people of color in inferior education positions (Feagin and Feagin 1978, 123). For example, because elementary and secondary schools systems are still neighborhood-based, housing discrimination continues to produce segregated neighborhoods and thus schools that lack adequate funding or quality education resources for students of color and thus block later opportunities for higher education (Feagin and Feagin 1978, 123-26).

Critical Race Theory in education can be defined as “a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the

subordination of students of color” (Solorzano and Yosso 2000). Critical Race Theory does three important things: (1) it challenges traditional paradigms related to discourse of gender, race, and class; (2) it exams the effects of race and racism from the perspective and experiences of people of color; and (3) it can provide a guide or at least offer suggestions to transform oppressive social conditions confronted by people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000, 42). This dissertation is also committed to the three statements above through is design, execution, analysis, and reporting of results.

Critical Race Theory in education has five themes that form the research methods, pedagogy, and perspectives of this dissertation. The first theme recognizes the intersectionality of race and racism, including other forms of subordination including gender and class (Solorzano and Yosso 2000). Likewise, race and racism are not marginal factors; they are central to explaining an individual’s experiences (Russell 1992, 762-3; Solorzano and Yosso 2000, 40). The second theme is to challenge the dominant ideology and traditional claims of the education system as an institution that claims to uphold objectivity, colorblindness, meritocracy, race neutrality, and equal opportunity (Solorzano and Yosso 2000). All of those traditional values that are often claimed in higher education as positives are actually camouflages of self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant U.S. groups (Calmore 1992; Solorzano and Yosso 2000; Solorzano 1997). The third theme is the social justice aspect of CRT to work towards the elimination of racism and, in the larger picture, the elimination of subordination based on gender, class, and sexual orientation (Solorzano and Yosso 2000; Wing 1997). The fourth theme is how CRT recognizes the knowledge of men and women of color to be

legitimate and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in a variety of methods including storytelling, narratives, biographies, family history, and *cuentos* (Solorzano and Yosso 2000). Finally, the fifth theme of CRT insists on analyzing race and racism within education by recognizing both historical and contemporary contexts along with interdisciplinary methods (Delgado 1992; Solorzano and Yosso 2000).

These five themes are central to why Critical Race Theory in education is an appropriate guiding theoretical framework for this dissertation. This dissertation uses the narratives of students of color that come from Mexican origin to better comprehend how identity, race, space, and racial ideologies are intertwined in a complex relationship within the context of higher education. The relationship involves historical and contemporary contexts that can also reveal the structural nature of racial identity. This dissertation also analyzes institutions in terms of their imposition of traditional ideologies based on colorblindness and objectivity not only on the lived experiences of these students of color. Thus, critical race theory in education is important to the overall analyses of findings within this dissertation along with other contemporary theoretical frameworks described below that challenge traditional theories.

Systemic Racism

In a number of ways similar to Critical Race Theory, Systemic Racism was developed to interpret the racialized character, structure, and development of U.S. society (Feagin 2006). Systemic racism critically analyzes how the social world has been created by racial oppression over the centuries and highlights that the reasons why white

Americans enjoy economic and civil rights benefits historically and continue to do so today is because of U.S. government policies and acts that were purposefully designed to help white Americans achieve wealth and protection at the expense of people of color in the U.S. (Feagin 2006). Central to this system is whites' historical "obsession" with Black bodies, culture, and communities that exists to this day (Feagin 2006). Systemic racism started because of whites' need to control Black bodies through slavery and exploitation to turn a profit; thus, much of the U.S. legislation since the 17th century developed as a white response (or backlash) to Black resistance to slavery and other forms of oppression such as Jim Crow and other civil rights violations (Feagin 2006, 2010a). An examination of the experience of Latinos (especially Mexicans who have had land that is now part of the U.S.) helps strengthen the theory of systemic racism and also complicates it by adding more layers to the extent of whites' economic and social exploitation of other people of color. Thus, it is important that we learn how this system of oppression functions by also listening to the experiences of people of color today and in the past (Feagin 2006).

Most importantly, systemic racism theory focuses on how racism goes beyond the individual "bad apple," bigotry, or racial prejudice. Rather, it explains how racism "is a material, social, and ideological reality that is well-imbedded in major U.S. institutions" (Feagin 2006). Systemic racism theory views society as an organized racist whole with complex, interconnected, and interdependent social networks, organizations, and institutions that continue to produce, reproduce, and imbed racial oppression (Feagin 2006). This racial oppression embedded in all U.S. institutions affects different peoples

of color beyond Native Americans and Blacks Americans; it also includes Latinos and can be seen especially in legal and social discourse as early as the Mexican American War of 1840 (Cobas, Duany, and Feagin 2009; Feagin and Cobas 2014). While Systemic Racism theory acknowledges that institutions in American (the overall system) have changed over time, systemic racism theory maintains that these changes have been more diachronical, since most of the basic elements and institutions of racial oppression still endure despite these changes (Feagin 2006).

European whites established an educational system in the U.S. that for centuries has played an extensive role in creating and reproducing a racist system and oppression. As highlighted in this dissertation's introductory chapter, in the U.S., access to higher education and quality education is guarded, and only in the last half century have some racist policies preventing access to education for students of color been tackled. The reality is that, especially in the case of Latino and Latina education (especially for those of Mexican origin) in the U.S., they lag far behind their white peers in classrooms. Today, even though legal segregation is no longer acceptable, there are still social phenomena that continue to ensure that whites in American are granted access to better educational options. Education, more importantly, a college degree, is a major resource in U.S. society that is used as a means to increase not only one's quality of life but the quality of life for generations after. This is why education, especially a college degree, is such an important resource, and why it is guarded to the point where whites for the most part are seen as deserving such a resource, and people of color are not.

Because the higher education system in American is largely modeled after European traditions, and historically has been predominantly controlled by whites, using systemic racism theory and the white racial frame (discussed below) is important to this dissertation study. Systemic racism helps us understand how higher education is part of a system that still works to maintain racism even if actors are not aware or intentionally trying to do so. Systemic racism theory is especially useful not only when looking at the racialized structure and space of predominantly white institutions but also when looking at Hispanic Serving Institutions, as they are formerly predominantly white institutions in transition.

Theories on Racialized Space and Education

Universities are racialized spaces (Feagin et al. 1996). It is not until one finds himself or herself a member of the out-group that one becomes hyper aware of how space itself is racialized. Individuals and groups create environments within a space that can feel either welcoming, neutral, or hostile depending on your in- or out-group membership. All groups are not equal in influencing or controlling that space. The group with the most social power tends to be able influence and control a space. In university spaces, there is an historical legacy of inclusion that must also be considered as part of the campus's psychological and behavioral dimensions (Garcia 2013). College campuses and universities do not exist in a vacuum in which racial stereotypes and racial meanings based on power, privilege, and superiority/inferiority cease to exist. Rather, there are ways that a college or a university as an institution continues to reproduce or create

positive and negative racial meanings in inferred and relatively invisible ways (Moore 2008, 25).

In the case of educational institutions that are (and were in their founding) predominantly or exclusively white spaces, contemporary social norms such as de facto segregation and colorblind policies continue to reify whiteness in spaces without the need for intentional interaction of such agendas to do so (Moore 2008, 28). This concept, otherwise coined as “white institutional space,” is developed through the work of Moore that looks at how elite law schools in the U.S. recreated whiteness and accumulation of power of whites in the space to determine the norms, values, and ideological frameworks that organize the institutions that continue to promote oppression for students of color (Moore 2008). This dissertation argues that any university that can be considered predominantly white by definition (Chapter I) functions in the same way.

It is important to realize that, “space” itself is not neutral. It can be the case that a space is “white space,” but often goes unnoticed because it is considered neutral. Just like “whiteness” is an invisible construct and a social norm, the whiteness of a space can seem neutral and “normal.” Part of white privilege may be that the space itself is taken for granted by whites who do not define privilege in the context of their race (Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2003). There are several ways to theorize about “white space,” and there is a growing number of scholars contributing to the conceptualization and theory behind race and space. Acker, Feagin, Moore, Barjas, Ronkvist, and Tejeda are among the few theorists that focus on racialized space. Their works are conceptual guides for this study specifically because they counter colorblind ideologies and gender-neutral

ideologies that promote the idea that neither gender nor race matter and therefore are non-issues in contemporary America. This, of course, is not true; many studies have gone on to show how the intersectionality of race, class, and gender affect access to several resources, including higher education.

To begin with, Acker focuses on the workplace as a non-gender neutral space in which power exists in the relationships between what is defined as male and what is defined as female (Acker 1989; Barajas and Ronkvist 2007). Acker's work begins to give us a framework to think of spaces and the interactions in those spaces in which power can exist in relationships between definitions-- not just through the definition of gender, but of racial dynamics as well. Furthermore, Barajas and Ronkvist point out that Feagin has defined space in racial terms stating, "Social relations are physically structured in material space and human beings often view space expressively and symbolically. In most societies, those with greater power and resources ordinarily control the use and meaning of important spaces in society" (Barajas and Ronkvist 2007; Feagin 1996, 49). Furthermore, perhaps it takes a moment to consider space as racialized since everyday experiences and the social structure itself are racially organized to the point that actors perceive the racial meanings as "common sense" (Omi and Winant 1994).

Moreover, Nelley and Sumra (2011) provide four key characteristics of space to aid in the theorizing of race and space. They also explain racialization and the persistence of racial inequality as follows: (1) Space is contested. This means that individuals and groups engage in a political struggle about how to define and use the

space. (2) Space is fluid, not fixed; the meanings and uses of space can change over time. (3) Space is a place in which interaction and relational phenomena occur as individuals and groups create, disrupt, and recreate spatial meanings through interactions. And (4), the space itself is infused with difference and inequality (Neely and Samura 2011). These authors draw on the tradition of critical spatial theory and use works such as Massey's *Space, Place and Gender* to address how spatial theory can address issues of power, both at the individual level and the structural level, since power is in geography and an integral part of relationships around a space (Massey 1994, 22; Neely and Samura 2011). Furthermore, the authors recognize that race and space are similar in that they can vary across time and location; both involve political contests that determine the definitions and meanings of the two (Neely and Samura 2011). Thus, the making and remaking of space is at the same time about the making and remaking of race as they are interconnected (Neely and Samura 2011). In addition to the political struggles over meanings, there are actual conflicts across racial lines over resources and access to the space (Neely and Samura 2011).

Likewise, Barajas and Ronnkvist look at the relationship between what is white and what is not. They argue that this results in different expectations for whites and students of color in a higher education setting. The work of Barajas and Ronnkvist pushes us to move “the emphasis from the outcome of racism (institutionalized racism), to an emphasis on the process and ideology behind the outcome (racialized space)” (Barajas and Ronnkvist 2007). What is meant by racialization? Racialization has been defined by Omi and Winant as a socio-historical process in which both the social actors

and the social structure take on a racial dimension (Omi and Winant 1994). Cobas, Duany, and Feagin explain how Latinos and Latinas themselves are a racialized group in which racialization refers not only to their group as a race, but includes undertones of the denigration of their phenotypes, cultural characteristics, language, or even fertility (Cobas, Duany, and Feagin 2009, 1). But what does it mean for space to be racialized? Barajas and Ronnkvist as well as the work by Tejeda discussed below answer this question.

For example, Tejeda speaks about how educational experiences for Latinos and Latinas can *spatialized*. One of the ways that we can better understand the experiences of Latinos and Latinas in higher education is to investigate and analyze how the spaces of that education are socially constructed and how those spatialities act upon the social being inhabiting them (Tejeda 2000). According to Tejeda, Latinos and Latinas are subjects that can be defined not only in historical and social terms; they can also be defined in spatial terms. Thus, there must be a push to create theory that allows us to analyze how Latinos and Latinas can be both the producers and products of their spatiality like how we try to understand how they are the products and producers of their *sociality* and *historicality* (2000). Thinking through the construction of spatiality and being able to not only be a product of it, but also a producer of it, certainly raises the issue of power mentioned above in reference to Feagin's conceptualization of space. Tejeda also believes that in studying spatiality we can see how power and domination can operate in the very spatiality of Latino and Latina lives (2000). It is possible that there are spaces for which Latinos and Latinas not only find the meaning but also the

materials or resources within those spaces controlled to the point that they may experience those spaces as dominated and marginalized subjects (Tejeda 2000). In other words, it is possible for one to be disempowered just being within a particular lived space (Tejeda 2000).

Thus, studying space is crucial to understanding the experiences of both individuals and groups in any situation. Space can be anything from a neighborhood, to a restaurant, to classroom, to the university campus itself. This dissertation seeks to expand the theory about race and space, racialized space, and the role of power as it operates for Latinos and Latinas with the ability to assert their identities and culture in higher education. Thus it is important to include spaces that have different racial composition as it would be assumed that those campuses that are 50 percent or more Latino may be spaces in which Latinos and Latinas report having more power to create and/or transform the spaces and themselves compared with spaces that are predominantly white. Yet, universities are places that have a history, and some institutions of higher education, despite their current racial composition, have a history of being predominantly white and teaching from a white European curriculum. Can the meanings and experiences within a space be controlled by the social structure rather than by present individuals or groups?

Research and Guiding Theory on Racism Ideologies

A “frame” is a world view that structures the thinking process to make meaning of social/ racial structures by shaping what people see or do not see in a social setting (Feagin 2010b). Individuals use racial framing to filter and explain racial phenomena

through a predicted route (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 74). Race theorists and researchers have identified several racial frames that individuals can use to interpret their world in relation to race. This dissertation is primarily concerned with the sub-frames that Latinos and Latinas employ to explain their racialized experiences and surroundings as students in either Hispanic Serving Institutions or predominantly white institutions. However, before turning to the sub-frames that have been empirically linked to Latinos and Latinas, it is important to understand the dominant frame in the U.S. that many groups of color, including Latinos, either counter or to some extent adopt consciously and/or subconsciously. The sub-frames that Latinos and Latinas draw from are counter-framing, and the home-culture frame functions like worldviews. This is different from the concept of frames as used in the white racial frame and colorblind ideologies discussed below. The differences will become clearer throughout this chapter.

The dominant racial ideology in the U.S. today is *colorblind racism*, which explains that contemporary racial inequalities are the outcomes of non-racial forces and the seemingly natural nature of the economic market or the cultural limitations of certain groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 2). Bonilla-Silva's analysis of interviews with college students revealed four central frames within colorblindness that whites tend to use. These frames include *abstract liberalism*, *naturalization*, *cultural racism*, and *minimization of racism*. The first frame, abstract liberalism, uses ideas associated with political or economic liberalism to explain racial issues (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 76). This view champions individualism as an individual's choice or excuse to do or not to do something, [[but it does not support an institution's unfair racial practices]] (Bonilla-

Silva, 2014, 83). Also key is the belief that the government should not intervene in economic and social matters as “the economy” or “the market” tend to reach balance if left alone. This belief also holds that it will take a slow evolutionary process rather than changes made by government to change people’s hearts (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 82). Finally, this frame defends white privilege through meritocracy by asserting that only the most qualified can or should succeed (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 80).

The second frame of colorblind racism is naturalization, which explains racial issues as though they are natural occurring phenomena, such as segregation really being about people that just gravitate towards people in their same likeness, and that’s just the way things are (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 76). Sometimes it is suggested that certain preferences are biologically driven and typical of all racial and non-racial groups including people of color since they “do it, too” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 76). The third frame of colorblind racism is cultural racism that relies on culturally based arguments to explain the standing of people of color in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 76). Included in this frame are ideas about how Mexicans do not put enough emphasis on education and thus do not do well in education, or that Blacks have too many babies (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 76). Finally, the fourth frame in colorblind racism, minimization of racism, believes that racism and discrimination are no longer factors that affect the lives of people of color or their life chances because racism and discrimination are a thing of the past or just not currently prevalent enough to hold anyone back (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 77).

These four frames of colorblind racism shape contemporary interpretations of racism in the mainstream discourse. It can be said that, compared with the racism of the

Jim Crow era, there is a “new racism” in which contemporary racial inequality is produced through subtle, institutional, and seemingly nonracial practices or policies (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 3). Colorblindness is part of the subtle racism in which one can still make racist claims from a “softer” perspective in the mainstream or “front stage” but still use explicit racist claims behind closed doors. Overall, whites have become good at concealing blatantly racist acts to a “backstage” social setting that includes only whites, while more political correctness is practiced in the “front stage” in the presence of a more diverse racial audience (Feagin 2010b). Yet, just as mainstream discourse in America claims that America is a post-racial society, there is a debate regarding the exact definition of racism and discrimination. The different meaning that these terms hold for Blacks and whites often leads to miscommunication (Barndt, 2007, 57; Blauner, 2003). Differences in definition could be interpreted by the different frames used to explain the phenomena, where colorblindness offers a definition that is meant to misrepresent the world as it is and the dominant frame used mostly by white Americans is used to navigate their domination (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 74).

Colorblindness has a particular way of defining racism and discrimination that is evident when studying mainstream discourse. as Ashley Doane did in the article, “What is Racism? Racial Discourse and Racial Politics”. Doane highlights how since the Civil Rights Movement there has been a decline in the politics of race to accept overt ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority as part of blatant displays of racism, so that today being called a “racist” carries with it extreme negative connotations (Doane 2006). The terms “racism” and “racist” are extremely emotion-laden terms that elicit

defensiveness and denial by whites, especially if accused of being racist (Barndt, 2007, 55). Doane notes two competing definitions of Racism in American discourse which are related to two frames: the dominant colorblind frame that plays down the role of racism and the alternate frame that acknowledges racism as a structural phenomenon embedded in U.S. society (Doane 2006).

Doane found that within the context of colorblind ideology, racism can be defined as just being conscious of race by employing a racial category for any purpose. This is the ultimate application of colorblind racial ideology to say that race “doesn’t matter” (Doane 2006) . Colorblindness also tends to define racism in individual terms so that racism is no longer a significant problem in the U.S. but is produced by only a few bigots or racial supremacists tapping into hatred, stereotyping, or unequal treatment (Doane 2006). From this frame, racism can be perpetuated by anyone no matter his or her race, and this is the basis for arguments in mainstream discourse for reverse racism or “white as victim” (Doane 2006). However, the contesting definition of racism is related to structural and systemic practices that lead toward the oppression of people of color and the preservation of white hegemony (Doane 2006). The structural interpretation of racism comes from academic and intellectual circles, not from the dominant frame (Doane 2006).

A report that looked at how individuals from the Millennial Generation (those born post 1980, ages 18-30) defined racism found that most young people today do believe that race still matters, but this varied greatly depending on racial group and the institution being discussed (Apollon 2011). Young white millennials are less likely to

make connections across systems; young people of color bring up the issues of race in a systemic way compared with whites (Apollon 2011). In line with the dominant frame of colorblindness, young people had a difficult time defining present day racism and tended to fall back on generic terms that focused primarily on interpersonal forms of racism (Apollon 2011). Young whites more often defined racism as something that was intentional and occurred between individuals (Apollon 2011). Yet, young people of color, while often using generic terms of interpersonal racism when initially asked, had an easier time discussing and labeling entire systems as racist, given their experiences in them (Apollon 2011). Only those young people who had taken courses in race or ethnicity or who had experienced racial justice used institutional or system terms.

These millennials were born and raised predominantly in an era during which colorblindness has been the dominant frame. This is why so many individuals of this generation, including youth of color, initially use a colorblind interpretation of racism. As mentioned above, by the 1950s and early 1960s, the meanings behind racism, discrimination, and prejudice began to shift to be more about hostile feelings and beliefs about people of color, stereotypes, and the unequal treatment of persons of color compared with members of the majority group (Blauner 2003). By the mid-1960s, the terms prejudice and discrimination and the implied model of racial causation were weakened and could no longer explain the racial conflict and change that were happening for other more critical groups (Blauner 2003). Thus, in the 1960s, racial oppression moved from individual actions and beliefs to institutional and group understandings of racism and oppression, exclusion, and exploitation in a stratified

society. Institutional Racism came from Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton in 1967 in their book *Black Power* (Blauner 2003). Despite competing views, the dominant frame in the U.S. has been shaped by colorblindness.

Additionally, even though colorblindness can be traced to the 1960s, it is actually part of the larger, much older white racial frame. The white racial frame has long been used by whites to control their hegemony in the U.S. From the theoretical approach of the white racial frame, White Americans today have developed techniques to appear unprejudiced but still display subtle remnants of the white racial frame (Feagin 2010b). Colorblind rhetoric masks blatantly racist views of Americans of color that have continued in most whites' framing of this society (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Feagin 2010b). Today, this colorblind rhetoric tries to promote the image that whites are "no longer racist" and that we are now in a "post racial" society, yet this is just another version of the virtuous white rhetoric that has been the dominant frame since the 1700s (Feagin 2010b) .

Traditionally, in their framing of society, whites combine these major features: (1) racial stereotypes (a belief aspect), (2) racial narratives and interpretations (integrating cognitive aspects), (3) racial images (a visual aspect) and language accents (an auditory aspect), (4) racialized emotions (a feelings aspect), and (5) inclinations to discriminatory actions (Feagin 2010b). This is the white racial frame, and it helps individuals and groups understand and interpret their society from a biased perspective by providing the language and interpretations that structure, normalize, and make sense of a particular narrative of society (Feagin 2010b).

The frame includes a positive orientation to whites and whiteness and a negative orientation to those racial “others” (Feagin 2010b). The white racial frame is also an “ideal type” that has a large array of elements that in everyday practice can be drawn on selectively by white individuals acting to impose or maintain racial identity, privilege, and dominance in everyday interactions (Feagin 2010b). The white racial frame has its roots in the white European conquest, the components of which included capitalism, colonialism, and racial oppression. This system created a global racial order that placed persons of European origin at the top and has continued to shape individual societies as well as world patterns of trade, finance, politics, and communication (Feagin 2010b). The establishment of a racial hierarchy plays a central role in the white racial frame, which assumes that this hierarchy is the “natural order of things” (Feagin 2010b). This rigid social hierarchy ranks racial groups in ladder-like levels with whites at the top and Blacks and “others” at the bottom. . Top levels are granted certain significant socioeconomic benefits; very few benefits are granted to those at the bottom Black and “other” levels of the hierarchy. Whiteness is racial capital and encompasses not only economic and other material capital, such as greater income and wealth, but also substantial social status, social networking, and symbolic capital (Feagin 2010b). This symbolic capital is also at work and central to the white racial frame as it signals a common link shared by white Americans today. It can be seen in the way white strangers comfortably interact and relate with each other but have a difficult time relating to strangers who are not white (Feagin 2010b).

This frame is taught through the socialization process. It appears in and is transmitted through family conversations and is also taught in hidden curricula in schools (Feagin 2010b). Through “collective memories” and “collective forgetting,” a social reality is constructed. Collective memories include those memories that become origins for small and large groups of group memory that is used to teach the future generation and is taught by participating in social networks that have collective knowledge of narratives seen as common cultural currency (Feagin 2010b). Collective memory dealing with America’s racist past both shapes and legitimates the established racial structure of today’s society (Feagin 2010b). It is those with the greatest power, who tend to be affluent white Americans, who have the greatest control over the memories that will be remembered on a society-wide scale and then recorded through media, history books, laws, films, public announcements, and other organizational histories (Feagin 2010b). Similarly, collective forgetting is part of the way white Americans have tried to sanitize America’s collective memories by downplaying or even eliminating accurate information regarding America’s racial past, making it more difficult for all to understand or accurately assess present days realities of unjust enrichment and oppression based on racial lines (Feagin 2010b). This forgetting has always come at the expense of people of color in America whose past and present oppression has been belittled or denied. At times, the historical mythmaking is absorbed by non-white Americans (Feagin 2010b).

White Racialization of Latinos

The contemporary white racial frame continues to stereotype people of color as part of an anti-Latino and anti-Black sub-frame. The white racial frame continues to depict whites as virtuous and deserving compared with non-white groups. For example, the anti-Black sub-frame legally saw Black peoples as the personal property of European whites rather than as persons (Feagin 2010b). This anti-Black sub-framing, as we know it today, still includes emotion laden stereotypes and images of Black Americans. These stereotypes include the perception that Black and African peoples have a distinctive color, hair, and lips; are bestial and apelike; are unintelligent; have a disagreeable smell; are uncivilized, alien, and foreign; are immoral, criminal, and dangerous; are lazy; are oversexed; are ungrateful and rebellious; and have disorganized families (Feagin 2010b). By the 1840s, when the U.S. invaded and conquered northern Mexico, this anti-Black sub-framing was extended and applied to other racial groups including Mexicans and even Chinese working on the railroads at the time (Feagin and Cobas 2014; Feagin 2010b). In the 1830s-40s, white colonizers did see some of the elite Mexicans as white, but overall, they were placed at the bottom of the racial hierarchy through sub-framing (Feagin 2010b). For example, Mexicans often were labeled as “half Indians,” females were hyper sexualized, and males were stereotyped as lazy, much like Black Americans (Feagin 2010b). Furthermore, whites outside of the Mexican area viewed Mexicans as not white and racially inferior (Feagin and Cobas 2014; Feagin 2010b). By the 1800s, whites shared some political power with the Mexican elite based on the perspective that the Mexican elite were inferior to Anglo Americans but were still partly European

“Spanish” and thus “white enough” (Cobas et al. 2009; Feagin and Cobas 2014; Feagin 2010b). Today, the anti-Latino sub-frame within the white racial frame still stereotypes Latinos with negative language and images that portray Latino immigrants as animals, invaders, or disreputable persons who are threatening, dangerous, and burdensome (Feagin and Cobas 2014; Feagin 2010b).

This dissertation works within a theoretical framework that interprets the experiences of Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. as directly related to their racialization. The “racialization” of Latinos refers to how powerful groups in the U.S., such as white decision makers, are involved in constructing the media images and narratives that refer to Latinos as a “racial group” and attaches vilifying imagery and symbolism to Latinos’ alleged physical and cultural characteristics, such as language and phenotype (Cobas, Duany, and Feagin 2009, 1). Furthermore, the racialization of Latinos taps into the original and continuing perception created by white Americans with power and influence that Latinos are a non-white racial group (Feagin and Cobas 2014, 15). The stereotypes and perpetuation of white superiority over Mexicans can be traced back to the first contact with white Americans in the Southwest during the first half of the nineteenth century and has been applied not only to Mexicans but to other Latin American peoples as well (Cobas et al. 2009, 5-6). This negative and sometimes even hostile perception of Latinos and Latinas has led to the negative evaluations perpetrated by the white mainstream to endorse beliefs about the inferiority and foreignness of Latinos into the twenty-first century (Feagin and Cobas 2014, 22) . Just like other people of color, Mexicans are also portrayed in social media as being inferior in intelligence, uncivilized,

criminals, dangerous, unhygienic, and overall threatening to the “American way of life” (Feagin and Cobas 2014, 22). The height of whites viewing Latinos and Latinas as a threat to the American way of life has been coined as the “Latino Threat Narrative.” The Latino Threat Narrative is a collection of narratives used to portray Latinos as an invading force from south of the border that wants not only to reconquer but to destroy the American way of life (Chavez 2008, 2).

As the debates for immigration reform continue, it has become clear that “immigrant” is interlinked with the perception of “foreignness” and “Mexican” as part of the racialization of Latinos and Latinas, especially those of Mexican origin. In the white-controlled mass media, Latinos in the twentieth century are consistently portrayed through imagery and metaphors as unwanted and inhuman “aliens,” or even animals, that capture white America’s fears of “overpopulation” and the invasion of foreigners from south of the border (Santa Ana 2002). The mass media’s continuing emphasis on Latinos’ dark skin color and foreign language and culture has led to the labeling of all people who appear to be Mexican as “immigrants,” “wetbacks,” “foreigners,” “illegals” and “not American” (Cobas et al. 2009, 7; Ochoa 2004, 139). Furthermore, the stereotypes just mentioned are so intertwined with the phenotype and Mexican that, regardless of generation status, one who fits “the look” of being Mexican can be assumed to be an immigrant (Ochoa 2004, 140). Phenotypes such as skin color, eye color, hair texture, body build, and facial structures are often used as markers identifying race, which further plays into the racialization of Latinos to the extent that an individual’s legal status, citizenship rights, and “Americanness” are associated with one’s

race. It has long been part of the U.S. ideology that only white European Americans (and even then, not Eastern European) inherently deserved citizenship and the rights that accompany it (Lopez 2006).

On the other hand, while the racialization of Latinos and Latinas is a very real phenomenon, whether Latinos and Latinas themselves perceive themselves as a racial group, ethnic group, pan-ethnic group, or mixture of those, including concepts of nationality, class, phenotype, culture, origin, language, ancestry, etc., is a different story. Latinos have been treated as a homogenous group in the U.S., completely ignoring the fact that Latinos are actually diverse in their national origins, class, phenotypes, languages, cultures, and histories (Oboler 1995, 3). This also ignores the fact that Latinos have a variety of ways of identifying themselves and for different reasons. Since the 1980s Census, the numbers of persons selecting the “other race” category exploded and has come to be seen as a Latino phenomenon since almost all persons selecting “other race” also mark “Hispanic” ethnicity (Lopez 2005). Several studies have been conducted since, using survey data that replicate the Census ethnicity and race questions as well as adding more national and cultural identification options to better understand how Latinos themselves interpret the concepts of race and ethnicity (Campbell and Rogalin 2006; Hitlin J.Scott Brown, and Glen H. Elder Jr. 2007; Lopez 2005). Several scholars studying this “other race” phenomena have pointed out that the narrow conceptions of race and ethnicity as used in the Census are not adequate enough to capture the self-conceptions and lived experiences of Latinos in the U.S. (Hitlin J.Scott Brown, and Glen H. Elder Jr. 2007).

Thus, it should be no surprise to find that each of these variables influences the ways that a Latina or Latino will racially, ethnically, pan-ethnically, or even nationally identify himself or herself, also depending on context. Studies on identity have revealed a fluidity in racial or ethnic identity that can change depending not only on region, but also on context or situation, or even on a particular stage in an individual's life course (Campbell and Rogalin 2006; Torres et al. 2012). For example, "Hispanic" and "Latino" are both pan-ethnic terms that, as identities, depend on context and are greatly influenced by how individuals understand their own place in the U.S. and in relation to their country of origin (Rodriguez 2000) or culture of origin. The pan-ethnic labels do not fit neatly into the understandings of race in the U.S. and yet these labels are still used in formal research and government surveys as a socially real category to speak of a particular group, and are available as an identity that others can claim and utilize in their own self-understandings (Hitlin 2007). This dissertation does not ignore the fact that not all Latinos identify themselves in racial terms and acknowledges that Latinos of Mexican origin have multiple ways of identifying. Thus, this dissertation seeks to expand upon these understandings. Yet, it is important to realize that Latinos do not exist in a vacuum. The perception of Latinos as a race is very heavily influenced by the dominant white majority, whose attitudes and actions affect the experiences of Latinos and Latinas whenever they come into contact with the white mainstream.

Therefore, it is important that this dissertation works within the framework of the racialization of Latinos by whites to understand how Latinos navigate an educational system that is dominated by whites' assumptions about Latinos and that forces Latinos to

develop an identity in an environment that does not quite understand the complexities of Latino culture and even holds Latino culture in contempt. This racialization has been a process that has developed over a century and half and continues to be recreated and reshaped in contemporary discourse. Central to understanding the process of the white-imposed racialization of Latinos is the concept of “race,” which is considered central to white framing, folkways, and ideologies of society (Feagin and Cobas 2014, 11). The White Racial Frame is a concept developed to assist in addressing white actors as individuals and as a group which is responsible for the creation of the U.S. racist systems that function off conscious and subconscious narratives and racial ideologies that support and perpetuate. Below is a discussion of the White Racial Frame as it plays a central role in understanding the racialization of Latinos and Latinos for the purposes of this dissertation.

Counter-Framing and Other Racial Ideologies

In response to the dominant white racial frame, people of color have developed their own counter-frames. These were initially developed for survival purposes in the case of Native Americans and Blacks, but over the centuries they have developed into strategies for everyday resistance (Feagin 2010b, 159). “Counter-frames” help people of color in America better understand and resist their oppression (Feagin 2010; 19). Counter-frames are present for all people of color within the U.S., but scholars such as Feagin claim that Black Americans have the strongest counter-frame because they have had to deal with white oppression for centuries in several forms including slavery and segregation (Feagin 2010b, 163). A “strong” counter-frame, such as that of Black

Americans, includes: (1) strong critiques of white oppression, (2) aggressive countering of negative stereotypes about Black Americans, (3) positive assertion of the humanity of all Black Americans, (4) a clear assertion of the “American-ness” of Black Americans, and (5) a strong accent on liberty, justice, and equality for all Americans (Feagin 2010b, 163). However, Latinos and Latinas have been shown in previous studies to actually be multi-framers, meaning that they at times work from the white racial frame they have internalized and cannot escape because it is the dominant frame in the U.S. Yet, at other times, Latinos and Latinas can work from counter-frames and the home-culture frame.

The characteristics mentioned above that make the Black counter-frame can also be found within the counter-frame of Latinos in the U.S., although the most critical counter-frame may not be as widely as accepted across Latino ancestry, class, and phenotype groups. There are competing frames or ideologies¹ that are particular to Latinos and Latinas. For example, Latinos and Latinas, especially those of Mexican origin in the U.S., have had to face different challenges compared with Black Americans, one of those being that Latinos are always considered to be foreigners in the U.S. with an emphasis on cultural and linguistic differences. While it is true that Black Americans were at one point expected to integrate into the American mainstream, the possibility of real assimilation was never an option. However, Latinos and even Asian Americans have faced a slightly different challenge that expects them to assimilate into the American mainstream. According to Gordon, the traditional definition of

¹ Ideologies meaning a belief system used to rationalize existing social arrangements related to class, race, gender, legal status etc. that is rooted in the social structure (O’Brien 2008, 61). For example racist ideologies justify and validate why the white dominate group is superior and deserves to be materially privileged while “subordinate” peoples do not deserve full access and/or limited to the same resources (O’Brien 2008, 61).

assimilation includes Anglo-conformity (Feagin and Cobas 2014, 3; Gordon 1959).

Furthermore, the concept of assimilation even in its contemporary form assumes some sort of weakening of ethnic culture or identity for a “mainstream identity” (Alba and Nee 2005; Feagin and Cobas 2014, 5).

Thus, assimilation means not only the integration into American institutions but also the lessening or weakening of cultural practices, beliefs, values, and even identity, which are seen in opposition to the American way in order to truly be successful in the U.S. In fact, the last step in Gordon’s model of assimilation is that of identity; individuals opt for an identity that is similar to that of the dominant white culture (Gordon 1959, 1961). Because of the expectations and narratives of assimilation that have been imposed on Latinos in the U.S., a variety of frames and/or ideologies apply to the Latino and Latina experience. Although it has been suggested that we think of these ideologies in terms of a continuum (Feagin 2010b, 187), I contend that there is not a definite continuum that Latinos or Latinas fall into. Latinos and Latinas can work in and out of these ideologies or frames, sometimes within the same day or hour, depending on context, and possibly change throughout the course of their life. The fluidity of Latinos’ framing and racial ideologies makes it very difficult to study empirically without the use of longitudinal analyses, which have yet to be done. Work by O’Brien (2008) that looks at Asian and Latinos (mostly of Cuban origin) found that they moved in and out of colorblind ideologies, the related contemporary white racial frame which included negative stereotypes about other Latino groups, Blacks and Asians (O’Brien 2008, 93). O’Brien contended that this was because of their “middle” position in the racial

hierarchy. This dissertation adopts the idea that Latinos of Mexican origin can also move in and out of frameworks and ideologies. Yet this mobility is not because of their “middle status” in a white socially constructed hierarchy, but rather because Asians and Latinos are seen as foreign and because of phenotype differences (real or socially constructed by whites) (Kim 2000) have been indoctrinated into assimilationist and colorblind ideologies rooted in the white racial frame.

Despite counter-frames, it is possible for Latinos as well as other Americans of color to internalize all, if not parts, of the white racial frame and work out of it (Feagin 2010b, 189). People of color can be considered multi-framers because they can work both out of the white racial frame, anti-racist, and counter-frames (Feagin 2010b, 189). The white racial frame along with all its stereotypes, imagery, language, emotions, and narratives can be internalized by people of color who are exposed to the rationalizations by U.S. institutions, including the white controlled mass media, that make the white racial frame seem widespread and the norm (Feagin 2010b, 189-90). It is important to stress that even though there are some Latinos and Latinas who use or even endorse ideologies related to the white racial frame, including colorblind or even assimilationist ideologies, they believe they are or are trying to label themselves as “white”.

For example O’Brien found in her study on the racial middle use white American ideologies such as colorblindness and yet at other points would show more critical ideologies such as seeing the importance in affirmative action policies (O’Brien 2008, 93). Specifically, Latinos were able to use counter-frames to resist racialized stereotypes about their own group and deconstruct racist ideologies, but then would apply these

stereotypes to other groups (O'Brien 2008, 93). This study shows that Latinos had more flexibility to move in and out of frames especially when it came to camouflaging their negative sentiments about Blacks (O'Brien 2008, 93). While this study provided some valuable insights into how Latinos and Latinas use framing to explain their experiences, this study focused on adults, which is not the focus of this dissertation that is interested in how college students of Mexican origin may act in similar or different ways in the context of higher education.

There are other studies that look at framing for Latino and Latina college students and their experiences. For example, a longitudinally study with Latina and Latino college studies by Torres in 2009 investigates the meaning-making process of recognizing racist comments by looking at how Latinos themselves made meaning of racist thoughts or comments of their own. Torres points out that there are Latinos who are in a more privileged position as well as an oppressed position and that there are some commonalities between Latinos who work out of these two orientations (privileged vs. oppressed) (Torres 2009). In this study, Torres shows that the students in her study believed they are either oppressed or privileged depending on how they internalized societal values and beliefs about Latinos. Torres recognizes that white Americans possess and maintain power to influence, validate, and oppress other groups, and although people of color may have stereotypes about their own groups, they lack the power to impose their values on others (Torres 2009). This is important because even though some of the Latino students in Torres's study perceived themselves as having privilege, they are still technically oppressed as they did not have social group

membership as being “white,” and still are potential victims of oppression by the white privileged group.

Furthermore, what Torres found in her longitudinal study with Latino college students was that there were two types of students. Both types believed the stereotypes about Latinos, and the internalized beliefs of these stereotypes repressed how they saw themselves. The first group of persons identified as more Anglo-oriented and spoke of behaviors that identified themselves with Anglos in being more privileged compared with other Latinos because society would not see them as being Latino (Torres 2009). These students denied that the negative stereotypes applied to them since they would not be identified as Latino (Torres 2009). These students did not necessarily think they were Anglo, although they usually came from a background that gave them a preference to be seen as more Anglo. Torres does not explain what kind of background this was, that is, a more white background, such as being raised by one or more white parents, or living in an area where Latino culture was the minority.

On the other hand, there were students who also internalized the negative stereotypes of Latinos, such as Latinos are dumb because they speak with accents or Latinas all get pregnant at an early age (Torres 2009). These internalized beliefs affected how the students saw themselves compared with whites; this also affected their ability to see themselves as successful within white culture (Torres 2009). Additionally, there were some students that came from Latino-majority areas that took their ethnic identity for granted, assuming that Latinos were accepted anywhere, until they traveled out the area and had to learn how to identify racism and discrimination (Torres 2009).

Thus, Torres claims that this study shows that students from oppressed backgrounds used a different sequence to make meaning of internalized racism. Once they were able to process an alternative interpretation of the stereotypes of Latinos they had internalized, they were then able to reinterpret racist attitudes and finally come to a different way of understanding of “who I am” (Torres 2009). Thus Torres claims that this study shows that students from oppressed backgrounds used a different sequence to make meaning of internalized racism (Torres 2009). And once the students are able to process an alternative interpretation of the stereotypes of Latinos they had internalized, they were then able to reinterpret racist attitudes that made them either previously ashamed or caused them to deny their Latino background. They came to a more complete understanding, even a proud way of knowing who they were within their Latino identity (Torres 2009).

The pressure to conform and the rewards for this conformity can be tempting. Thus, some Latinos will endorse assimilation ideologies or aspects of the white racial frame that stereotypes even their own group (Feagin and Cobas 2014). While it appears that those individuals who conform to the pressure of Anglo conformity are granted access, although limited, into institutions and resources such as education leading to social mobility compared with individuals who oppose or resist conformity, working from an assimilationist ideology to reach those markers of success can be unhealthy and damaging. Research supports that cultural assimilation pressures are incredibly stressful as they ask for the abandoning of traditional beliefs, values, and even social networks

that can impact the mental health leading to depression and even suicide not only of Latino immigrants but the native born (Wadsworth and Kubrin 2014).

Similarly, another study by O'Brien, Mars, and Eccleston (2011) examined the relationship between system-justifying ideologies (beliefs about a just world, and the Protestant work ethic that led to cultural messages that legitimize status differences and group-based inequalities) and academic outcomes for 78 first-year Latino and Latina college students. These students came from UC Santa Barbra and were enrolled in an introduction to psychology course in which the majority of students were born in the U.S. It was a longitudinal study over the course of the year that interviewed students at Time 1 (fall quarter) and Time 2 (spring quarter). They used measures to assess students' level of system-justifying ideologies and also a four-item identity centrality subscale to assess the importance of the ethnic group in self-concept which is like a 7 point-Likert scale. Additionally, they used scales for diversity belonging and experiences of discrimination.

O'Brien et al. acknowledge that system-justifying ideologies have positive psychological consequences for white Americans, but for members of racial minority groups the psychological consequences can be often negative (O'Brien, Mars, and Eccleston 2011). They found that students who endorsed system-justifying ideologies at Time 1 had lower GPAs at Time 2 compared with those who rejected system-justifying ideologies. However, students who endorsed system-justifying ideologies at Time 1 also reported fewer experiences of discrimination and greater feelings of belonging at the university at Time 2. This led the authors to conclude that while endorsing system-

justifying ideologies led to lower grades, it served as a protective factor for perceiving or even experiencing less discrimination and thus led to stronger senses of belonging at the university (O'Brien et al. 2011).

However, it is not to say that Latinos are absent or have a weaker counter-frame, only that the counter-frame with the most critical aspects that resemble the characteristics of the Black counter-frame is not widely promoted, at least not publically. The most critical of these frames would be that related to the work and theories developed through the Chicano Movement from Chicano scholars, activists, and artists. Furthermore, Latinos, especially those of Mexican origin, work out of a strong home-culture frame as many are first or second generation who still maintain connections to Mexican culture (Feagin 2010b, 188). A home-culture frames is like other resistance frames that draw on material from the cultural backgrounds of the oppressed (Feagin 2010b, 19). Mexican origin peoples have a history of dealing with oppression not just in the U.S. but are also considered a colonized a people

There is a tendency to think that the most critical moment for Latinos in the U.S., especially those of Mexican origin, was during the Chicano Movement, but it has been argued that the militant ethos that was developed during that era endures and is irreversible, even though some of the militancy has been lost (Garcia 1997, 15). There has been a consciousness, a body of ideas, strategies, tactics, and rationalizations that was developed during the Chicano Movement that today Latinos still use to respond to external challenges to the Mexican American community, including racism, discrimination, poverty, and segregation (Garcia 1997, 4). Ever since the Movement,

Chicanos in the U.S. are no longer seen as an invisible people as they have continued to grow in numbers. The U.S. mainstream is forced to acknowledge our presence as Chicanos, and others of Mexican origin continue to struggle and are a mainstay in the political and cultural arena (Garcia 1997, 8-9).

Thus, there are several frames that deal with racial ideologies that Latinos in the U.S. are exposed to and utilize in their lives. The group, even if we focus only on those of Mexican origin, is still very diverse. Thus the way the frames are utilized is very complex and almost as varied as the group itself as there are individuals from different cultural backgrounds, language capabilities in English and Spanish, phenotypes, generational statuses, and socioeconomic backgrounds. All of these have an impact on which frames or what parts of frames Latinos may use to interpret phenomena such as discrimination, racism, race, and ethnicity for instance. This dissertation uses the guiding theory of the white racial frame along with its sub-frames of colorblindness and assimilation along with the counter-frames and home-culture frames that Latinos may work in and out of. Each one of the studies above highlight how Latinos and Latinas do use multiple frames and racial ideologies in interpreting their experiences with race, racism, and discrimination.

Discussion and Hypotheses

This dissertation builds on past research and is committed to investigating the experiences of Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin in higher education. The research and theories discussed above come together as a whole to push forward research and theory on Latino and Latina experiences in higher education and its impacts on their

racial/ethnic identity development. Research above tells us that racism and discrimination (interpersonal and structural) continue to be part of the Latino and Latina college experience and affect not only Latino students' sense of belonging but also their academic progress/success. This dissertation argues that such experiences, including the racialized space that is a product of the long history and norms of the racial composition of a space, affect Latino and Latina racial and ethnic development. Young adults are at a critical point in their lives. Research on racial/ethnic identity shows that they are for the first time exploring the meaning of this identity on their own and starting to move away from their families' influence (Torres 2004). Furthermore, the research discussed above highlights how even perceptions of an unwelcoming or hostile environment towards one's racial/ethnic group can influence an individual to either become more closely connected or to weaken their ties to their racial/ethnic identity.

Whether or not individuals experience a strengthening or a weakening of their racial/ethnic identity ties is shown to be impacted by racialized space, and this dissertation argues that this [[it is unclear what "this" refers to, but your verb "is" must have a subject]] is also part of a coping mechanism or even survival strategy for living in predominantly white spaces. This dissertation also recognizes that not all Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin are the same. It recognizes that there are major differences in worldviews and experiences for those of various generational statuses, legal statuses, ages, genders, English and Spanish speaking capabilities, phenotypes, and socioeconomic statuses. Thus, the weakening or the strengthening of the racial/ethnic

identity is largely affected by an individual's background in response to the racialized space and its expectations.

Because the research stresses that racial composition affects racialized space and racial climate, it is important to understand how various racial compositions affect Latinos and Latina college students. This dissertation highlights the lack of clarity in the literature that looks at experiences at Hispanic Serving Institutions. This dissertation investigates possible differences or similarities of experiences for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin in Hispanic Serving Institutions of various racial compositions and extends the investigation to how those experiences at the interpersonal and structural level affected racial/ethnic identity development among Latinos and Latinas undergraduates of Mexican origin.

Based on the research on racial composition and its effects on the racial climate at universities, it is hypothesized that there will be a difference in racialized experiences for students attending Hispanic Serving Institutions with differing racial compositions. Specifically, it is hypothesized that the greater the percentage of Latinos and Latinas in an institution's student body, especially compared with the white student population, the fewer instances of interpersonal racism and discrimination the Latinos and Latinas are likely to experience. However, the responses and coping mechanisms that Latino and Latina students use to navigate the spaces will vary greatly based on their backgrounds. This dissertation hypothesizes that at the structural and institutional level, universities with higher percentages of Latinos and Latina students might have less institutional racism since larger numbers of Latino students would mean having more programs,

organizations, and curriculum focused towards Latino students and might require an increase in the overall visibility of Latino and Latina faculty and staff.

Finally, regarding the impact on identity development, it is hypothesized that those students that report experiencing more interpersonal and structural levels of racism and discrimination will be at predominantly white institutions where there are fewer Latinos in number. This type of racial climate will have the most negative impact on their sense of belonging and, thus, their overall racial and ethnic development because there will be few outlets that will allow Latinos and Latinas to explore and even celebrate their racial and ethnic identities. However, the coping mechanisms for this will vary depending on the student's background. Students at a Hispanic Serving Institution, especially where Latinos are the majority of the population, will face lower levels of interpersonal and structural levels of racism and discrimination and have more opportunities to explore and celebrate their racial/ethnic identity as Latinos of Mexican origin.

Chapter I (Introduction) introduces the guiding research questions. Each one of these guiding research questions is directly related to the hypotheses explained above. By focusing on these specific research questions, this dissertation study will be able to conduct an analysis that will not only provide an answer for the hypotheses but also contribute to the research and understanding we have about the experience of Latino and Latina students of Mexican origin in universities of various racial compositions.

CHAPTER III

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This dissertation uses a mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) to investigate the racialized experiences of Latinos and Latinas attending universities with various racial compositions. Overall, this dissertation divides the analysis into three parts. The first part is a demographic analysis of several public universities located in the Southwest. The Southwest is an appropriate region to draw a sample from because the majority of Latino and Latina students (especially those of Mexican origin) attend colleges and universities in this region (Medina and Posadas 2012). Data collected for the demographic analysis comes from publically available institutional reports produced by each university's Office of Institutional Research Offices. Note that the institutions' names, and thus direct sources, are omitted to maintain participants' anonymity. Institutional reports that focus on the racial composition history for each institution were used to select three universities that best fit racial composition criteria necessary to make a comparison of student experiences.

Parts two and three of this dissertation use qualitative methodology for further analysis. Undergraduate students of Mexican origin were recruited from the three chosen institutions and interviewed on several topics including their racial and/or ethnic identity, the university's racial climate and its effects on racial/ethnic identity, experiences with racism or discrimination on campus, and attitudes about racism and

discrimination at the individual and structural level. There are a total of thirty-two, one-on-one semi-structured interviews and two focus groups as part of data collection. The final part of this study uses thematic analysis to compare and contrast the experiences of Latinos and Latinas at the three university sites. The following sections break down the quantitative and qualitative methodological procedures used in data collection and analysis.

Demographic Analysis for Choosing Institution Sample

As explained in Chapter II Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review, many research studies lack clarity by not specifying the racial composition of the Hispanic Serving Institutions. This is problematic because the racial composition of Hispanic Serving Institutions varies widely; Latinos and Latinas can represent anywhere from 25 percent to 80 percent of the total population. Additionally, it is important to distinguish among Hispanic Serving Institutions based on the number of years they have maintained a Latino enrollment competitive with white enrollment. This dissertation defines a Latino competitive enrollment as one in which the percentage of Latinos actually surpasses the enrollment percentage for white students. In terms of racial climate, the length of time Latinos have been the majority racial group should make an impact on the climate. The effect on racial climate of an institution's shift in racial majority and the number of years Latinos have maintained a majority position is one of the questions this dissertation study seeks to answer.

Thus, it was important to carefully select universities to compare and contrast student experiences. Part one began with a large number of universities that are part of

public school systems in Texas and California. Only the final three universities chosen are included in this dissertation. Using publically available data from university institutional research offices, several key factors related to racial climate were collected to group universities into three categories. These racial climate categories include: (1) universities that by definition are predominantly white institutions, (2) Hispanic Serving Institutions with approximately 50 percent or fewer Latino students that had not had a majority of Latinos enrolled for many years, and (3) Hispanic Serving Institutions with more than 60 percent Latino students that had had majority Latinos enrolled for many years. The key factors used to place universities into these three categories included, (1) racial history of the university, (2) trends in student enrollment focusing on racial differences, (3) racial composition of student enrollment for Fall 2013, (4) racial composition of faculty at all levels, and (5) trends on retention and graduation rates by race.

Table 1 displays information on the enrollment percentages by race for undergraduate and graduate students attending each university during the Fall 2013. HSI80 has the largest percentage of Latino and Latina students of the three universities used in this sample (83%). HSI40 has the second largest percentage of Latino and Latina students (41%), and PWI has the lowest percentage of Latino and Latina students (20%). PWI is only 5 percent away from being able to petition for a Hispanic Serving Institution designation and funding. The white student population at PWI is the highest of the three universities (67%) compared with 26 percent at HSI40 and the only 9 percent at HSI80.

Thus is the reason why these three universities were chosen to be the best comparisons of racial climate.

However, there are other reasons why these universities were chosen as the best comparisons for racial climate including the racial composition of faculty at all levels for the Fall of 2013 as represented in Table 2 below. At PWI, the faculty racial composition largely mirrored its white student demographics; 73 percent of the faculty are white and 6 percent are Latino. It is important to note that PWI has about 20 percent Latino students but only has 6 percent of their faculty are Latinos. HSI40 has 67 percent white faculty and 11 percent Latino faculty compared with a 41 percent Latino student body. And finally, HSI80 has 49 percent white faculty members at all ranks.

Furthermore, enrollment trends by race of each institution across many years show both Hispanic Serving Institutions included in this sample started as predominantly white institutions. Recall, previous research that suggests that this is why Latino and Latina students do not perform any better at Hispanic Serving Institutions compared with those at predominantly white institutions. Figure 1, Enrollment trends from 2009 to 2013 for Latinos and whites at PWI illustrates the slow growth of Latino enrollment over the past five years. In fact, PWI in the near future will be able to apply to for the Hispanic Serving Institution designation and funding. Historically, PWI was established in the mid-1800s as a predominantly white institution that maintained a segregated institution for its Black students located on a completely different campus. This segregation was maintained beyond *Brown v. Board of Education* 1954 because white

Table 1 Racial Demographics of Graduate and Undergraduate Enrollment by Institution Type, Fall 2013

	Predominantly White		Hispanic Serving (HSI 40)		Hispanic Serving (HSI 80)	
	H.C.	Percentage	H.C.	Percentage	H.C.	Percentage
White (non-Hispanic)	28,275	67%	6,027	26%	2,046	9%
Hispanic/Latino	8,331	20%	9,367	41%	19,109	83%
Black (non-Hispanic)	1,370	3%	940	4%	617	3%
Other (non-Hispanic)	4,053	10%	6,726	29%	1,231	5%
Total	42,029	100%	23,060	100%	23,003	100%

Source: Publically available institutional reports produced from each university

Table 2 Racial Demographics of Faculty by Institution, Fall 2013

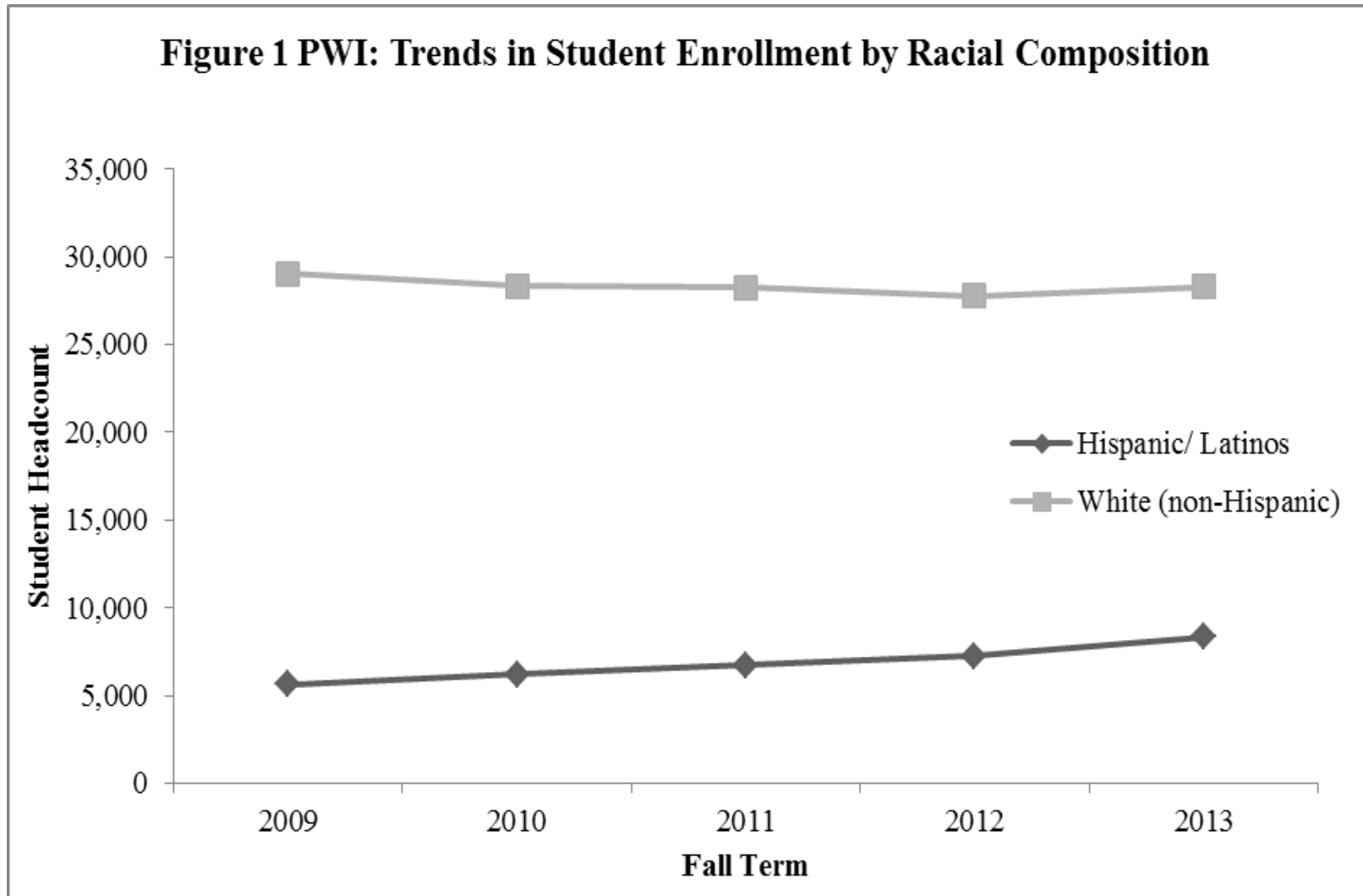
(All Academic Ranks)			
Faculty Race	Predominantly White	Hispanic Serving (HSI40)	Hispanic Serving (HSI80)
White (non-Hispanic)	73%	67%	49%
Hispanic/ Latino	6%	11%	34%
Black (non-Hispanic)	3%	4%	2%
Other (non-Hispanic)	18%	18%	15%
Total	(HC = 2,675) 100%	(HC = 1,327) 100%	(HC = 1,309) 100%

Source: Publically available institutional reports produced by each university

students voted to maintain the segregation until the early 1960s when the first Black students were admitted, although on a limited basis.

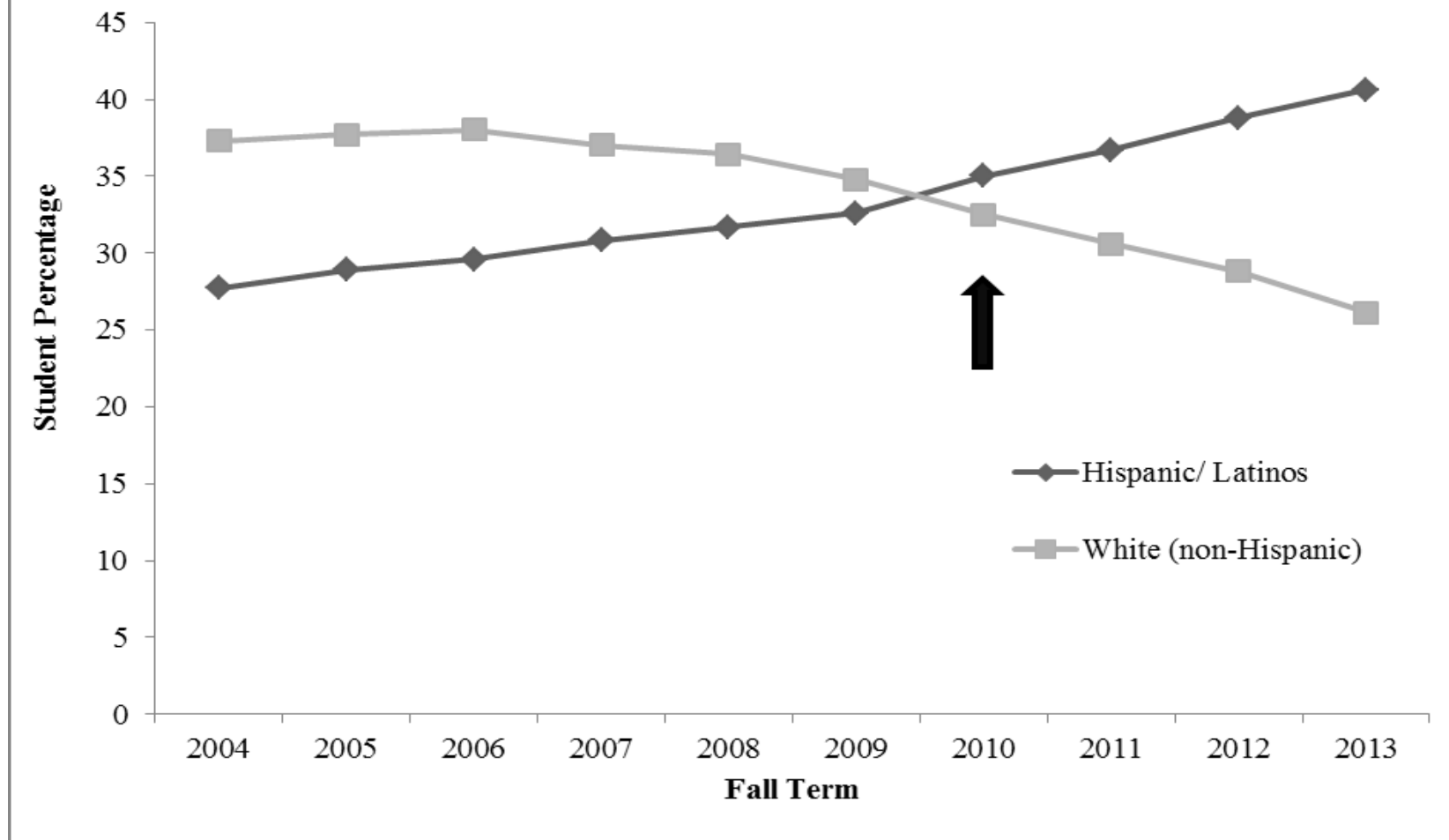
The history of Latino and Latina students at PWI is a bit more complicated to trace. There is a reference to the attendance of Latino students as far back as the 1890s with the first Latino graduate. Also in 1890s there is reference to students from Mexico in the school's timeline history. When pictures of these students are provided, they appear to be fair skinned Latinos. It was difficult to obtain any definite historical demographic data from this institution that was publically available.

In Figure 2 we see HSI40's enrollment trends from 2004 to 2013. This institution has had a growing percentage of Latino enrollment and a slow decline of white enrollment across 10 years. However, even though HSI40 had the required 25 percent Latino population to file as a Hispanic Serving Institution prior to 2004, it was not until 2010 that the percentage of Latino and Latina students surpassed the population percentage of white students enrolled. Historically, HSI40 opened in the early 1900s as a predominantly white institution, but unlike the other two universities, HSI40 was originally a teaching college until the late 1900s when additional majors were added. The presidents of this institution have also all been white men until 2013 when they had their first Latino university president. Thus HSI40 is an institution that overall fits into category two where Latino students are less than 50 percent of the enrollment and have not been the majority for a long time at an institution that was largely white controlled to begin with. It can be argued that the majority Latino student population in 2010 is very recent; Latinos had not been the majority long enough to bring about campus racial



Data: collected from institutional reports produced from each university

Figure 2 HSI40: Trends of Student Enrollment by Racial Composition

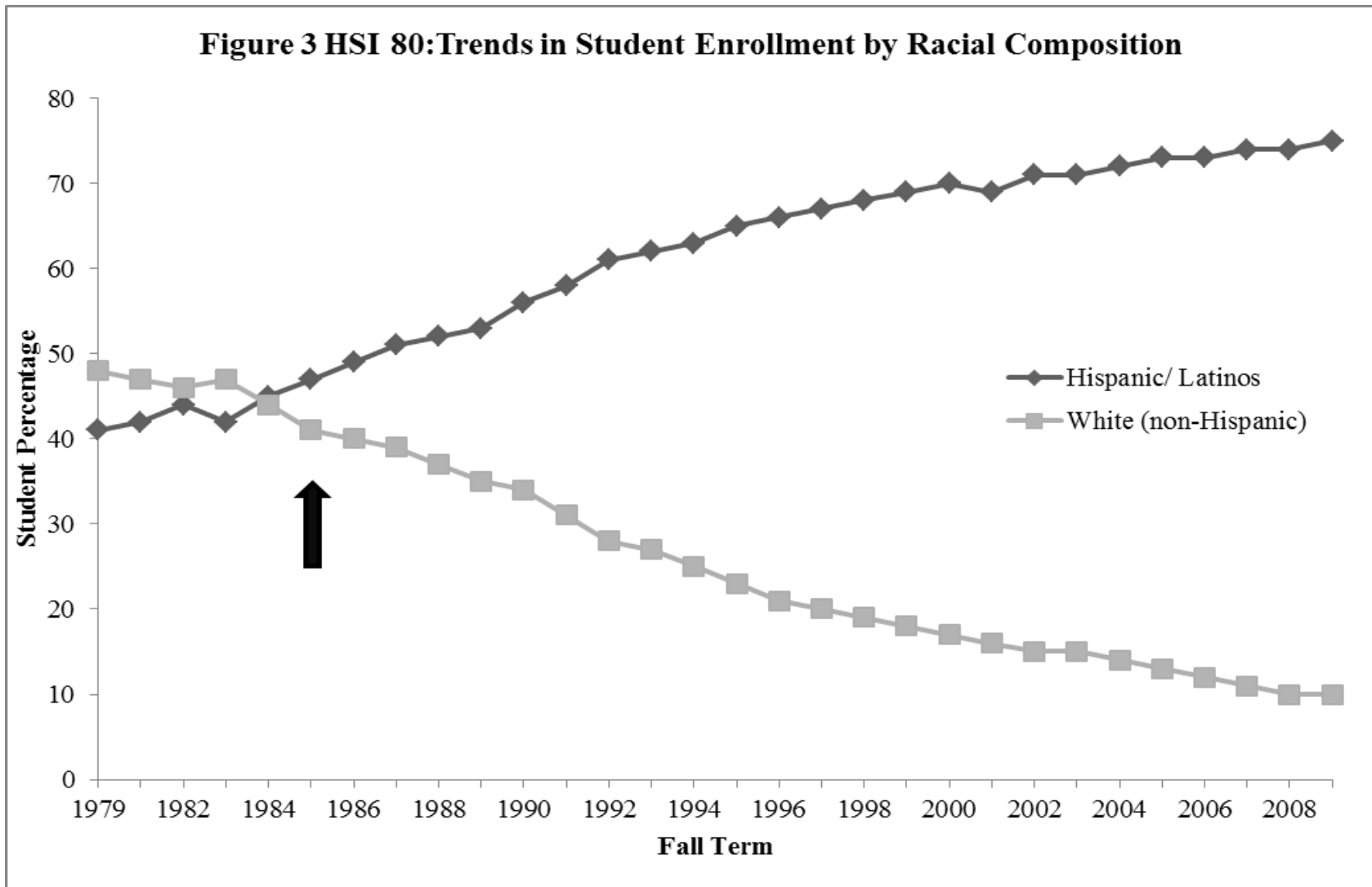


Data: collected from institutional reports produced from each university

climate change through the petitioning for more Latino activities, organization, and programs and curriculum focused on Latino and Latina students' interests and needs.

Finally, HSI80 has the longest history (approximately 27 years) of a majority-Latino student population. Figure 3 shows that the Latino percentage surpassed white students around 1985. However, it can be speculated that Latinos could have been the majority even further back, since in the 1980s, the U.S. Census created the "Hispanic" label which reshaped the way many institutions recorded race data. Because this figure uses publically available data, it would require petitioning HSI80 for further enrollment records to determine how this institution collected and recorded its data on race through the decades. Yet, historically, HSI80 also began as a white institution in the early 1900s and remained all white until the mid-1950s when 12 Black students were admitted in response to a suit filed by a Black woman who had previously applied and had been rejected by the institution. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the administration began to include Border Studies programs and the Chicano Studies program in response to the demographic shifts of more Latino students, a reflection of the geography of the region.

Additionally, this demographic shift on campus also triggered slow social change on campus: student activities related to confederate themes disappeared, and sorority and fraternities began admitting Latino students. Growing numbers of Latino students demanded more representation in the faculty. The 1970s was a period of great protest until the first Hispanic dean was appointed in late 1970s. HSI80's Latino student population has continued to grow as its white students population has continued in equally steady decline. In response, there has continued to be development of



Data: collected from institutional reports produced from each university

departmental programs focused on issues that are important to the Latino community. For example, the social studies department focuses on Border Studies, and the creative writing department offers a fully bilingual master's degree and supports Spanish literature and poetry. Their students have won major literary prizes in Mexico and Chicano award competitions. Yet, the university's presidents have always been white. The current president is female, but her racial background is uncertain. She is the first president with a full Spanish name and has been in office since the 1980s. Recall that there is still a large percentage of white faculty overall compared with the student demographics.

All the historical data is publically available and produced by each university; it may be found on the main university web pages or by using a google searches. Recall that the specific sources have been omitted due to the promise to maintain the anonymity of participants in this study who agreed to talk about many sensitive issues and may have been less inclined to share experiences knowing they would be linked specifically to their institution. It was the disposition of the majority of the participants to want to speak favorably of their institutions. Thus, to help avoid this bias, the institutions' names are omitted.

Recruiting and Interview Procedures

Overall, the recruitment of students was similar across the three campuses with a few minor differences due to limitations noted below. It was important that the student sample have a variety of majors as well as a variety of years attending the university. Thus, purposeful sampling was utilized to recruit a diverse group of participants.

Snowball sampling was also used as initial contacts would at times suggest other friends who were interested in participating. Recruiting included requesting permission from faculty at all the institutions to allow me to introduce myself as a doctoral student and recruit students for my dissertation study at the end of their classes. Classes included history, sociology, and anthropology. History, sociology, and anthropology courses (especially introductory courses) were selected because these courses often have diversity in majors who are using the courses as electives. I handed out flyers and took contact information for anyone interested in participating or who had friends interested in participating.

When granted the opportunity, I also recruited students from Latino focused events, although the majority of the interviews came from students recruited after a class announcement. Using Latino events was especially important at PWI where there were fewer Latino and Latina students in classes. Additionally, during the recruiting, special care was taken to make sure that the students understood that they could identify with any term (i.e. Latino/a, Chicano/a, Hispanic, Mexican American, Mexican, etc.) as long as they were of Mexican origin. My recruitment letter/flyer (Appendix I) was careful to include all possible terms that Latinos and Latinas have used to racially/ethnically identify. The students were promised that their identity would remain anonymous as well as the names and exact locations of the institutions they were attending, despite the demographics. The reason for this was to encourage students to feel comfortable to speak freely about their experiences or their thoughts about their institutions, the faculty,

student, and administrative interactions. All this information was also included in the signed consent form that each student signed before beginning the interview.

Differences in recruiting among the three institutions resulted from the difficulty of finding willing participants at HSI40. There may be several factors that contributed to this. For example, this was the location with the most cold contacts. Also, due to monetary constraints, only one on-campus visit was feasible compared with two visits a few months apart at the other two institutions. About ninety-eight percent of the interviews took place face to face as opposed to phone or Skype interviews. Students in all three campuses seemed to lose interest in participating through a phone interview or could not do a Skype interview. To help the fact that I could not return to HSI40, I was able to recruit students through a mass email sent out to every student with a sociology major several months after the initial campus visit in addition to asking contacts to continue to pass out my information. This still failed to generate many participants who for various reasons lost interest or could not do phone or Skype interviews, or failed to return an emailed copy of the consent form after many attempts. Due to these limitations, in the future development of this study, it would be best to make another in-person trip with funds to interview more students on site, as this proved the most effective way of collecting interviews.

Interview Procedures and Questions

The interview schedule design takes into consideration the research already conducted on Latino and Latina experiences at universities and the nuanced ways that they talk about racial/ethnic identity. For example, questions were inspired primarily

from the large body of work from Torres Vasti and Kathrin Parks (see Chapter II). Interview question design created probing questions related to how participants, (1) defined or explained their racial/ethnic identity, (2) felt their identity might be impacted or not by the campus environment, and (3) inquire about experiences with [[“with” may not be appropriate here, but “on” is not appropriate]] the campus racial climate related to race relations in general, both at the structural and interpersonal level (microaggressions). The interview was divided into three parts with the more sensitive questions related to racism and discrimination experiences towards the end of the interview. Interviews began by asking students about their general background including where they grew up, what their parents did for a living, generational status information, and the racial climate of their high schools. The second part of the interview included racial/ethnic identity questions and questions about how they saw themselves and why. This included discussing factors they thought had shaped their identity before and during their college experiences, including race relations with whites and others of Mexican origin related to identity.

Furthermore, in part two the questions on race/ethnic identity were left open-ended rather than asking students to choose from a list. The identity questions were left open to capture the nuanced ways that other research has suggested that Latinos and Latinas use and conceptualize race/ethnic identities that do not fit any particular structure. The open-ended questions were a success in capturing the complexity. Part of the results related to racial/ethnic identity are found in chapter X and can further speak to

the success of open-ended questions when it comes to identity rather than trying to impose identity choices.

The third part asked students about their definitions and attitudes about racism and discrimination in general, and then proceeded to ask students if they could share any personal experiences. As expected, the third part of the interview related to racism and discrimination was the most difficult part of the interview process. Vignettes, short fictitious narratives that illustrate an example of an incident of racism, were included in this portion of the interview to help create talking points for those students who were not comfortable talking about their own experiences initially. There is a chapter dedicated to the findings in which students handled this portion of the interview, which is very important for those interested in further studying racism and discrimination on college and university campuses for both administrative and academic purposes. Not all students are comfortable talking directly about issues of race, racism, and discrimination but have other nuanced ways of talking about such topics or revealing their attitudes towards them. Such nuances are unlikely to be captured in survey-type questionnaires that are typically created for administrative campus racial climate research.

Overall, 32 one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with undergraduate students (only one was a graduate student who had also attended the same university as an undergraduate). These interviews lasted 60 to 180 minutes. Furthermore, there were two focus groups (2 groups with 2 students each) that lasted about 180 minutes. While it was optional for students to choose to participate in a focus group or in a one-on-one interview, the majority of the students preferred the one-on-one interview.

Only four students chose to do focus groups as two separate couples. The focus groups and the one-on-one interviews were asked the same questions, which were analyzed qualitatively in the same way. The option for interviews was provided primarily to maintain open to what students would feel most comfortable participating in.

Great care is taken in during the interview process to ensure that participants feel comfortable as this encourages students to open up more on difficult and sensitive topics related to racism and discrimination. Due to the sensitive nature of the topics, students are always given the option to skip questions or terminate the interview. All students signed an Informed Consent form, were aware of the purpose of the research, and were assured that no one would know the name of their institutions. Omitting the names is done to further make students feel open to express opinions or experiences in reference to the institution or anyone affiliated with the university. such as staff or faculty. The interview atmosphere is further made as comfortable as possible by allowing students to choose where and when they wanted to meet for the interview. All interviews took place at locations and times that made the student feel comfortable. Most interviews took place in semi-public places such as coffee shops or restaurants, both on and off campus. A small number took place in my office by request of the student.

Overall, throughout the interview process, I tried to develop rapport with each student in various ways. I am a woman of Mexican of origin, but I am fair complected with dark brown eyes and hair. In my past, I have had people assume that I was Latina or even as a biracial mixture of white and Asian. The students were free to make assumptions about my racial and/or ethnic background as they wished, as I did not offer

information about my background. For example, at the beginning of the interview, they did not know my generational status, ancestral history, if I spoke English or Spanish initially, or even how I chose to racially/ethnically identify. I tried to maintain as much ambiguity in the beginning and then adapt to the student's perception of me in various ways such as through language use. For example, all interviews were conducted in English, although students were given the option to respond in whichever language they felt more comfortable speaking, as I speak both languages (English and Spanish). I chose to ask the questions in English only for purposes of consistency. All the students chose to primarily speak in English; a few would code switch between English and Spanish, which is recorded in the transcriptions. Spanish words or phrases made their way into the interviews if the student introduced the code switching first; as part of rapport, I would participate. If the students did not use Spanish, then I did not use Spanish.

Additionally, I maintained an open and friendly disposition. The fact that I am a woman of Mexican origin could have been a benefit and yet could have been a minor limitation at the same time, depending on the student's own sense of orientation. Where they believed mine was could greatly affect the information they were willing or felt free to share with me. For example, it was found that overall, female participants were more likely than male participants to be open about their experiences with racism and discrimination. Also, as part of my adaptation to students' views, I maintained an open and friendly disposition, which could be challenging when students were using colorblind or racist language or interpretations of themselves individually or collectively as Latinos. Overall, I feel that I was successful in adapting to a variety of orientations as

I was able to collect several orientations and attitudes toward such sensitive subjects, especially from individuals I came across who did not share my orientation to such issues.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Transcriptions were done by myself, which gave me the opportunity to review interview materials several times. Responses produced hundreds of pages of interview data that covered many topics beyond the focus of this dissertation study. However, to better focus the responses to related interests of the dissertation study, I used a two tier coding system. First, transcriptions were printed out and coded broadly for categories that focused on: (1) racial/ethnic identity, (2) experiences and reactions to racism/discrimination on or off campus, (3) attitudes and frames related to race, and (4) attitudes/awareness of racialized space at the institution. In the second phase of coding, I imported digital versions of the interviews in Atlas.ti 7, which allowed me to make more detailed and nuanced coding categories informed by the first phase of coding. Atlas.ti 7 is a software that was especially helpful in the second phase of coding as it keeps track of concepts and codes numerically and allows for collapsing or expanding of categories as I saw fit. By utilizing this two-tier system of coding I was able to review my interview data multiple times and thus have a clear sense of the narratives and overall themes about the participants' experiences.

This dissertation did use thematic analysis which focuses on the similar themes across interviews. Especially important was developing a system of coding that allowed me to constantly compare and contrast experiences across several levels. Special

attention was given specifically to the following categories: (1) institution type (PWI, HSI40, HSI80), (2) high school racial composition background (predominantly white, predominantly Latino, diverse-Black-Latino, or diverse-Latino-white), (3) generational status (first generation, second generation, third plus), and (4) Spanish speaking capabilities (fluent, not well, understood Spanish but did not speak it, did not know Spanish at all). Each of the categories listed above have been shown in the literature to have some effect on shaping the racialized experiences and interpretation of those experiences for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin. Furthermore, each category served as a filter that could reorganize the data on Atlas.ti 7 to allow for better contrast and comparison analysis. Keeping a record of the high school racial composition was done to provide a general idea about the student's environment before coming to the university. High school racial composition was based on student perceptions, unlike the raw data used for the university selection, which was based on institutional reports.

Furthermore, as part of coding process, participants' names were changed to protect their identity. Great care went into selecting a pseudo name for the participants to select for them a name that was comparable. For example if a student name could only be pronounced in English (example Maggie), this students would not be given a Spanish name such as (Alejandra), but given a name such as Marie. It was important to maintain comparable names as often these names are used in creating assumptions about the racial/ethnic background of an individual. Additionally, all the names of the institutions, their locations, and any campus buildings or other identifying names were changed to help maintain anonymity.

Participant Descriptives

As part of this dissertation study, basic demographic information was taken to keep track of characteristics that are known to shape the racialized lived experiences of Latinos and Latinas in the U. S. Table 3 displays the generational status, Spanish speaking capabilities, and gender breakdown for each institution included in this dissertation study. The Predominantly White institution's sample was about evenly male and female (male 47%, female 53%) and primarily second and third generation (94%) compared with first generation; the majority of this sample spoke Spanish fluently or not well (94%). HSI40's sample population was predominantly male (83 %), second generation (57%), and spoke Spanish fluently (37%). And finally, HSI80's sample population was more female (62%), majority first and second generation (76%), and mostly spoke Spanish fluently (85%).

Table 3 Student Sample Demographics by Institution Type

	Predominantly White		Hispanic Serving (HSI40)		Hispanic Serving (HSI80)	
	H.C.	Percentage	H.C.	Percentage	H.C.	Percentage
Male	8	47%	5	83%	5	38%
Female	9	53%	1	16%	8	62%
Total Interviews	17	100%	6	100%	13	100%
1st Generation	1	6%	1	17%	5	38%
2nd Generation	10	59%	4	57%	5	38%
3rd Generation	6	35%	1	17%	3	23%
Total Interviews	17	100%	6	100%	13	100%
Spanish Well	10	59%	4	37%	11	85%
Spanish Not well	6	35%	0	0%	1	8%
Spanish None	1	6%	2	33%	1	8%
Total Interviews	17	100%	6	100%	13	100%

CHAPTER IV

RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

Introduction

One major finding of this dissertation is how Latino and Latina participants practice racial/ethnic identity management. What this means is that Latino and Latina students at all three institutions admit to (1) using multiple racial/ethnic labels to self-identify and (2) changing their racial/ethnic identity label depending on the situational context, including the racial background/nationality of others involved in the social interaction. Even though the sample is from different geographical locations, participants report using similar definitions and rationales for when to use the labels “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Hispanic,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican.”

Moreover, “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Hispanic,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican” are only a few of many labels that Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. can choose to racially/ethnically self-identify. Each label has its own history, and attached meanings and assumptions are interpreted as positive or negative, depending on various frames or perspectives. For example, remember that racial/ethnic identities and the social structure are two sides of the same coin; racial/ethnic identity is as much an internal phenomenon as it is an external phenomenon that is tied to the social structure (Burke 2004).

Racial/ethnic labels are associated with specific meanings; imagery associated with those meanings is constantly being developed and reproduced through social interaction. For example, the dominant white racial frame has a long history of

racializing and stigmatizing Latinos and Latinas. This dissertation argues, however, that “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Hispanic,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican” do not have equal stigma within the anti-Latino sub-frame of the white racial frame. Rather, these labels have levels of associated stigmas, stereotypes, and imagery.

The participants in this study are very much aware of the negative stereotypes and imagery that the white racial frame associates with each label and use this awareness to guide them towards using the least “threatening” racial/ethnic identity label in social interacts. In other words, Latinos and Latinas in this study are aware of a “hierarchy of stigma” in which the labels are ranked from least stigmatized/threatening to most stigmatized/threatening within the white racial frame. For example, “Hispanic” in this dissertation study is interpreted as the least threatening label for white Americans compared with labels like “Chicano/a,” “Latino/a,” and especially “Mexican.” This chapter further explores how this hierarchy of stigma influences the labels Latinos and Latinas use, depending on the perceived racial/ethnic/national background of their audience.

However, the white racial frame not only influences the meanings and imagery associated with the racial/ethnic labels for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin. Latinos and Latinas themselves as a group also shaped the meanings and imagery behind the labels with understandings of their own history, struggles, and victories. Latinos use their home culture and other resistance frames to resist, create, and transform the meanings and markers of nationality, resistance, selling out, “Mexican-ness,” and “American-ness” associated with each racial/ethnic label. Thus, “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,”

“Hispanic,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican” are racial/ethnic labels that can have several meanings at the exact same time depending on the frame used to interpret the label. This dissertation highlights how racial/ethnic labels also have meanings and stigmas outside the white racial frame, which adds to the complexity of negotiating these meanings. On a daily basis, Latinos and Latinas go through these complex negotiations whenever answering the seemingly simple question, “What are you?”

The sections below highlight the main themes related to each the label, “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Hispanic,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican,” and speak to the position of each label within the hierarchy of stigma within the white racial frame and the home-culture frame for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin.

“Hispanic is what You Say to White People or in Formal Situations”

From the perspective of the white racial frame, the least threatening racial/ethnic identity label is “Hispanic.” We will start here and progressively make our way towards the most stigmatized label, “Mexican.” This section explores why “Hispanic” is the least threatening label from the white racial frame and how Latinos and Latinas in this study use “Hispanic” with this awareness. Three main themes appear to be related to the utilization and meaning behind the label “Hispanic.” “Hispanic” is a label that (1) is used primarily to self-identify in documentation, (2) is not preferred because it is broad and non-specific enough to include any Latin culture (i.e., Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.), and (3) is a label used in the presence of whites and within white spaces because whites are perceived to be more comfortable with the label. These three themes often appear together and are unique to the label “Hispanic.” Despite these very specific

situations and contexts, “Hispanic” is the second most frequently used label by participants in this dissertation study next to “Mexican.” Remember, participants often report using a variety of labels depending on context, space, and audience, but Latino and Latina participants admit to using “Hispanic” most often overall; “Mexican” is the second most frequently used label.

Overall, participants express a detachment to “Hispanic.” In other words, “Hispanic” is not the participants’ label of preference when communicating a connection or bond to their culture or ancestral background. Participants describe “Hispanic” as a label imposed upon them starting at a young age and continuing throughout their years in the school system. The following quotes are examples of the many responses that express similar experiences and familiarity of imposition of “Hispanic” unlike other labels (“Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican”).

Why do you think you do not use “Hispanic” unless someone already calls you Hispanic? I don’t know, I guess cause everyone just says you’re Hispanic, you’re Hispanic, like I know when you fill out your scantrons it says Hispanic, so I just started calling myself Hispanic. (Gabriela, 2nd Generation, PWI)

I don’t think about it, I think I’ve just grown up using Hispanic, the standardized tests in school say it and I just used it all my life. (Sonia, 3+ Generation, PWI)

The comments of both of these women illustrate how “Hispanic” is imposed to the point that they use this label without thinking twice about it. These women further admit to using “Hispanic” in documentation related to school (tests). Related to the imposition of “Hispanic,” there is a detachment to the label as being culturally or ancestrally meaningful. The dissatisfaction with how “Hispanic” is used to homogenize many Latin cultures and peoples is found in other research that shows when Latinos are

given a choice, they prefer to racially/ethnically self-identify with a more culturally specific label such as “Cuban,” Mexican,” “Puerto Rican,” etc. rather than ambiguous labels such as, “Hispanic” or “Latino/a” (Golash-Boza 2006). For example, the following quote by David illustrates the awareness of the homogenizing effect of the label “Hispanic.”

I feel like that’s a broadened label [Hispanic]. Like ‘Black’ can refer to Africans, people from Nigeria, Jamaican, and we all put that under ‘Black’. I can see myself under ‘Hispanic’. In America that’s how I’m considered, so I don’t reject it.” (David, 2nd Generation, HSI40)

David acknowledges that “Hispanic” and “Black” lump together several cultural groups. Furthermore, David is also aware that “America” labels him “Hispanic” and thus he accepts the label. Other research shows that later generations (unlike first-generation U.S. born Latinos and Latinas) are more likely to use the homogenized label “Hispanic”(Telles and Ortiz 2008). Yet, the level of resistance to the label “Hispanic” varies in this dissertation study. Very few participants are like David who admit to using “Hispanic” a lot more than other labels regardless of the situation. It is hypothesized that David uses this label exclusively because he explains how earlier in life he was ostracized by “more Mexican” Latinos who ridiculed him for not knowing Spanish, and therefore he also felt that he was not “Mexican.”

More consistently, participants had difficulty expressing meaningful connections to “Hispanic” in labels of their specific culture or ancestry. It is hypothesized that this is because “Hispanic” is intentionally designed to lump together a variety of cultures, languages, histories, and peoples with various phenotypes. The “Hispanic” label was developed in the late 1980s by the government agency (Census Bureau) that sought it as

a solution to classifying people of Latin origins together. Thus, participants prefer to use specific labels such as “Mexican” that speak to a particular culture, history, and ancestry that they relate to and identify with in various forms. The following quote illustrates this preference.

Do you use Hispanic? I don't have anything against the label Hispanic, like whenever we have to describe ourselves in documents its Hispanic, so that's what I see myself as... but I can't think of any instances where I introduced myself as Hispanic. Why? I don't know. I guess cause I assume that Mexican is a sub category of Hispanic so I guess saying Mexican is fine. (Elisa, 3+Generation, PWI)

Elisa expresses the lack of using “Hispanic” outside of documentation and her preference for “Mexican” as it was more specific than just saying “Hispanic.” At this point, it is clear that using “Hispanic” for formal situations is common and clear because of the lack of connection to the label in a meaningful or nuanced way for these participants. Considering the age of the participants (18 – 28), they are one of the first generations to be exposed from a very young age to the “Hispanic” label as an official and government approved identity label. Considering that “Hispanic” is the second most popular label of self-identification within this study, the governmental purposes of developing the label “Hispanic” have been successful. By both exposing young Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin to the “Hispanic” label at a very young age and imposing its use on official governmental and less official school documentation, the notion that “Hispanic” is the appropriate way to self-identify on documents has been reinforced, regardless, of how Latinos and Latinas actually self-identify in more meaningful ways in their everyday lives. One last example related to the imposition of “Hispanic” comes

from Angie. Angie sums up the overall sentiment and difficulty relating in a meaningful way to “Hispanic” as a culturally or ancestrally significant label.

See I don't really, I don't use that word [Hispanic]. It's used in general just for surveys. It's out of place. *You use it only in surveys?* Well, yeah cause what is it? White, Hispanic, other, but I don't really use that word out loud. I feel like it was like, it's just a general label for people that speak Spanish and live in South American. And my mother told me *es* something the *gringos* just made up, and it doesn't really make sense, it's just like, just fill that out. But you are Mexican. Ok. It [Hispanic] doesn't feel like, it describes Mexican, I don't know if that makes sense [laughs]. (Angie, 2nd Generation, HSI80)

Angie once again highlights how “Hispanic” is a label for documents and not used “out loud” when people ask about her cultural or racial background. Furthermore, Angie admits that “Hispanic” is a confusing label when applied to Latino peoples. This quote also shows a level of home-culture resistance to “Hispanic” in which a Latina mother explains to her child how “Hispanic” is a nonsense label that white people made up for documents, but that the child should remember that she is Mexican.

In addition to the belief that “Hispanic” is just for documents and not specific enough for cultural or ancestral relevance, “Hispanic” is also safe to use around an individual or group of whites inquiring about one's cultural or racial/ethnic background. Findings support this as they show that “Hispanic” is used more often within white spaces such as participants from PWI report using “Hispanic” more often. Students at PWI report the most frequent day-to-day interactions with whites overall as they live their day-to-day lives within a white space overall designed for the comfort of its white students. The fact that only second- and third-generation participants use “Hispanic” aloud in social situations suggests further that “Hispanic” means someone born in the U.S. Other research has found similar meanings that “Hispanic” signals U.S. born

(Dowling 2014). For example, Arturo admits using more than one racial/ethnic identity label to self-identify, depending on the background of the people with whom he is interacting. When I asked Arturo to further elaborate on why, he states the following:

I guess like if I'm filling out a form for the university and if it asks if you're Hispanic, yes. Or if somebody from... from... a white person asks... where you from? Cause you know how white people are more sensitive on those things and don't ask, what are you, they are like where are you from, are you from Mexico? I would say no, I'm born here, I'm Hispanic. I always use Hispanic. (Arturo, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Earlier in the interview, Arturo admits that he does not self-identify personally as “Hispanic,” but with another label that he created to better fit his cultural and ancestral background. Notice the interaction with whites that Arturo refers to. He says that whites are more “sensitive” to the idea of where one is from than what someone is. Thus, the question, “Are you from Mexico?,” is really asking, “Are you foreign born?,” and the response is, “I'm born here. I'm Hispanic.” “Hispanic” is used throughout the interviews to refer to someone who is U.S. born. This suggests why mostly 2nd and 3rd generation Latinos and Latinas in this study use “Hispanic” aloud for a white audience. The following quote by Gabriela illustrates how “Hispanic” is associated with being U.S. born even among other Latinos.

Well I say that I'm Hispanic, but sometimes I want to say that I'm Mexican because my parents are Mexican and are born in Mexico... I'm stuck in the middle between U.S. and Mexico, but I just call myself Hispanic. Sometimes I want to say I'm Mexican, but people are like no you're born here, say Hispanic. (Gabriela, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Gabriela clarifies that “people” means other Latinos from Mexico. Similar comments are made in passing that students use to suggest that “Hispanic,” unlike

“Latino/a” or “Mexican,” refer to someone not born or from the U.S. “Hispanic” has its origins as a label created by the U.S. government and is not used outside of the U.S. Remember that Arturo says that white people are “sensitive” to where people are from. Part of whites’ racialization of Latinos and Latinas through the anti-Latino sub-frame is to associate “brown” people (among other groups, such as Asians) as being foreign to the U.S. Yet, within the white racial frame, the association with being foreign born for people of Mexican or Latino origin does not stop there. Latinos who are perceived as foreign born are also associated with being undocumented or even “illegal” (Ochoa 2004). Furthermore, for several decades, the white mainstream media has portrayed immigrants to the U.S. in animalistic metaphors and images that suggest Latinos are a threat to the American way of life (Chavez 2008; Santa Ana 2002). Below, Carina explains how she, too, navigates whether to say Latina versus Hispanic to whites:

Do you use Latina? Yeah, I use that. Is there a time when you use Latina over Hispanic? Hispanic is something that I use in a conversation like this or on forms, but Latina is more loose. Like talking to my friends, the other one is more formal, I guess. Do you see a difference in their definition? No, it’s just in context. I guess, um, especially here, cause most people are white at [university name] and it might throw them off to say Latina. And using Hispanic is more comfortable for them. Was there ever a time you used Latina in front of white people? No, not. No, just with my friends. When I think about it, it doesn’t make sense because they are the same thing, but I use them differently. (Carina, 3+Generation, PWI)

Even though Carina states that it does not make sense to choose “Hispanic” versus “Latina,” since the labels mean the same thing, in reality, the labels do not mean the same thing. Carina in some way recognizes that “Latina” is a trigger for whites and that “Hispanic” is more “comfortable” for them. The words used to describe whites’ reactions in Arturo’s and Carina’s quotes (“sensitive” and “comfortable”) suggest that

talking about racial/ethnic identity with whites is an interaction in which a Latino or Latina is aware of labels that can make whites uncomfortable and, thus, may choose to avoid those.

Overall, “Hispanic” is less “threatening” because it comes with the assumption or expectation that it describes someone who is born in the U.S. and not “foreign” and therefore “dangerous.” To some extent, Latinos and Latinas use “Hispanic” to signal their birthplace when talking to other Latinos. To say, “I’m Hispanic,” signals to other Latinos as well as to whites that you are dealing with someone who is not an immigrant but born in the U.S. Additionally, “Hispanic” carries a sense of political correctness since it was created by a U.S. government body that imposes the labels on everyone (whites as well as Latinos and Latinas) as the appropriate way to racially/ethnically refer to others or self-identify. Recall that “Hispanic” is not used anywhere outside of the U.S. and that it is endorsed by U.S. institutions as the politically correct way of addressing Latinos and Latinas despite the fact that Latinos and Latinas when given the option prefer a more specific label. “Hispanic” is a safe label that homogenizes whole cultures and histories into a label that does not require knowledge of individual differences. And finally, the word “Hispanic” even has an English sound that is easy to pronounce for English speakers; it cannot be pronounced in Spanish like “Latino/a” or “Chicano/a.” The Spanish word “Hispano” does sound different when pronounced in Spanish, but this word is not used by the U.S. government. The U.S. term is “Hispanic.”

Furthermore, the fact that participants from PWI report using “Hispanic” more often (especially in the presence of whites) emphasizes how racialized space affects the

choice of the racial/ethnic identity label one uses. If anything, sometimes these labels actually function as pseudo-racial/ethnic self-identities, because even though participants are using them, they really do not identify with them for various reasons. Thus, it is not such a big surprise that “Mexican” is the second most used label next to “Hispanic.” After all, participants go back and forth between both white space and spaces within Latino families and communities. This is why racial/ethnic identity theory needs to be developed further to consider that space, context, and audience can shape what labels Latinos and Latinas use, which do not always reflect how they actually feel about themselves.

So what exactly makes the label “Latino/a” more of a trigger word for whites, or just a word that Latinos and Latinas in this study did not choose for self-identification? The answers to these questions are explored in the section below.

“My Family Never Used Latina/o... It’s a TV Label.”

The label “Latina/o” is used the second least, along with “Chicano/a,” by participants as a label to self-identify racially/ethnically. The main three themes for this section include, “Latino/a”: (1) is also too broad and not specific enough to imply Mexican ancestry or cultural background, (2) is a pop culture label used in the media but not used by participants’ families to refer to themselves, and (3) implies “resistance” and “pride,” unlike “Hispanic.” Once again we see how within the white racial frame and the hierarchy of stigma that “Latino/a” is between “Hispanic” and “Mexican.” However, from a home-culture frame, “Latino/a” has issues similar to “Hispanic”; it is not specific enough and is a pop culture label.

To begin with, the label “Latino/a” originated as a response to the “Hispanic” label; Latinos realized that because “Hispanic” is an imposed label from the U.S. government, another label created by our own people should be used in resistance to “Hispanic.” They chose “Latino/a” (Lopez 2005). Despite this specific history, participants in this dissertation study do not show their awareness of this history as they claim that “Latino/a” is a label never used by their families and only heard in pop culture media used to refer to actors or singers. Once again, Dowling’s work finds related findings for the use of “Latino/a” as a pop culture reference (Dowling 2014). Beyond “Latino/a” being seen as a pop culture term, study participants cited the great influence of the family, who were constantly mentioned as persons who never used this label.

Well, yeah I could say that I’m Latina. *But you don’t ?* No, well, no I don’t use it to describe. Oh I’m Latina, I say I’m Mexican. I don’t use it. Cause I think my family has always been, oh you are Mexican. We never, I never, hear anyone say we are Hispanic or Latinos, I think that’s why. (Angie, 2nd Generation, HSI80)

Angie explains that she does not use “Latina” because her family never uses this label. Instead, they use “Mexican.” This highlights how Latinos and Latinas choose to use specific cultural labels, such as “Mexican,” over more broad or ambiguous racial/ethnic choices. Another respondent added similar sentiments about the preference for “Mexican.”

When I have to fill out a paper, the closest is Mexican American, if that’s not there, then I’ll [go] for Hispanic or Latino, but those have no significance to me. Latino is such a narrow label, I think it’s just, I think It, the more I grow I up the more specific I want to get on what I feel I identify myself to. And the closest I can get, besides calling myself, Jose, is calling myself Mexican. So I don’t know. It’s a matter of how specific. (Jose, 2nd Generation, HSI40)

Jose and Angie show how “Latino/a” has no significance to them, which is similar to their reaction to the term “Hispanic.” These students are from two different institutions and even two different geographical locations. However, they, like many others among the participants, express similar sentiments toward these labels. It is unexpected that so many Latinos and Latinas, regardless of location, admit to not using “Latino/a,” and that many do not seem to know the history behind this label in response to the label “Hispanic.” Furthermore, there is some confusion in the belief that “Latino/a” actually represents someone from South America and not Mexico. This may also add to the reasons why no one uses this label to racially/ethnically self-identify. For example, in the following quote, Fernando, who does not use “Latino” for himself, says it is because he believes the label “Latino/a” represents the following groups:

The word Latino I think is meant to represent someone from south, like south Mexico and South America. It’s also like a music and art genre. And so, once you say Latino you get that sense of lets go eat tacos or go dance salsa. There is a generalization, not a stigma, about it. If you say Latino, that’s not what I image a short Mexican with a mustache. (Fernando, 1st Generation, HSI80)

Fernando’s statement is a complex one. First, you see the reference to “Latino” as a popular culture label. Second, he admits “Latino/a” is someone from South America that the term is generalized to represent someone eating tacos and dancing salsa, which is not a dance originating from Mexico. And third, Fernando admits that “Latino/a” does not remind him of “a short Mexican with a mustache” which he tries to claim is not a generalization or a stigma, but actually is a stereotype of what a Mexican would look like, stemming from the media’s version of that anti-Latino sub-frame. This is an example of how even these Latino and Latina students internalize imagery about their

own group from the anti-Latino sub frame and twist its meanings to fit Latino's more nuanced concerns of cultural and ancestral specification with labels. Similarly, the following quote by Carlos also touches another assumption about who the "Latino/a" label represents compared with someone labeled "Hispanic."

Do you use Latino to self-identify? I'm not sure, my parents never used that label so I never used it. They used Mexican or Hispanic. And at least, I usually hear on TV like Univision and I feel like they are from Miami and they use Latino more, I don't know, I just never used it. I guess... when they say it, it comes to me like.... Not sure... like... like a person that lives in the states maybe and wants to identify themselves as Latino to stand out from others. I feel like there is more pride to it than just saying, oh I'm Hispanic. And I'm a Latino, that feels like I'm proud of it and I don't care what people say. It has that kind of connotation. *Is that pride a bad thing or why would you avoid that label then?* It's not that I'm not proud of where I'm from, I just never use it. I grew up around Hispanics, and so maybe if I was more around American culture, I would have used it. (Carlos, 1st Generation, PWI)

Once again, we see "Latino/a" as a label parents do not use, which influences participants like Carlos to also not use it. Second, we see again the reference to the pop culture media, the TV, and stations like Univision as places in which "Latino/a" is perceived to be used more frequently. Finally, Carlos expresses that "Latino" represents someone from the U.S. who is "proud" and "wants to stand out" and "don't care what people are saying." These phrases are related to the actual purpose of why "Latino/a" was created as a label of resistance compared with someone who just accepts the label "Hispanics, which is not resisting and rather adopting a made up label by a U.S. government body.

Furthermore, when I ask Carlos why he considers "pride" as "bad" or something to avoid, he states that he is just more familiar with the label "Hispanic." However, it is

clear that “Latino/a” means something that is more about resistance than is “Hispanic.” Resistance as seen from the white racial frame is a challenge to the dominant authority of whites and thus a threat. After all, the origins of the label within the U.S. relate to a level of resistance. Thus, from the perception within the white racial frame, “Latino/a” can become a more uncomfortable image for whites compared with “Hispanic.” Overall, the findings for how participants in this study use “Latino/a” show how families influence the racial/ethnic identity labels family members are accustomed to and use despite the popularity of labels such as “Latino/a” in the social media. Furthermore, we see how a lack of knowledge about the origins of the label creates confusion.

“Mexican American Means You’re U.S. born or ‘Americanized’”

Participants do not discuss “Mexican American” as a racial/ethnic identity label in as much depth compared with the other racial/ethnic labels, “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Hispanic,” and “Mexican.” The third- and second-generation participants express their awareness that “Mexican American” applies to them as they are born in the U.S. with ancestry from Mexico. However, many feel that “Mexican American” represents someone who is Americanized or comes from a family who has been in the U.S. many generations. Thus, many participants did not want to Americanize themselves by using “Mexican American,” as many claim to be closer to the “Mexican side” of themselves. Main themes for the use of “Mexican American” include: (1) it is not used very often by participants, (2) it represents the Mexican ancestry of someone who is born in the U.S., and (3) it is understood as someone who is more “Americanized” compared with the

other labels. Furthermore, many participants felt “Mexican American” was a label that they had not heard or felt that it was outdated because they did not hear the label.

For example, Elisa, a third plus generation participant illustrates below how “Mexican American” is used to associate someone with being “American” or at least U.S. born with Mexican ancestry, but not utilized often.

Mexican American means that I’m from here [U.S.] so I might put Mexican American... I would use that one [Mexican American] only if I and my friends are discussing our ethnicity in detail, so I mean I’m Mexican, but I’m also from here [U.S.]. So I would use Mexican American and that probably the only time that I would use it. *So you do you use Mexican American often?* No, not really. (Elisa, 3rd Generation, PWI)

In another quote, Carlos, a first-generation Latino, also alludes to the assumption that “Mexican American” represents someone born in the U.S. He states in his quote, “To me that [Mexican American] feels like someone that was born in the states. I think that if I wasn’t born in US, I say Mexican, but if I was born here, I would be saying Mexican American.” Thus, there is a clear understanding that “Mexican American” means U.S. born for some of the participants. However, Daniel and Cristina also explain how “Mexican American” refers to someone who is more “Americanized” and why they do not use a label like that for themselves. Both participants claim to be more proud to connect to their “Mexican-ness.” Furthermore, both these participants are not U.S. born, but still focus more on the cultural meanings of what a “Mexican American” represents.

I have used that label [Mexican American] a few times, but I have moved to more to Chicano. *Why? What does being Mexican American mean to you?* I guess I would identify more with Mexican American with people from the west like from California... I think that people there in California have more of a mixture, like more American less Mexican. I guess that would be more Mexican American, and here in the southwest, especially this area, I think the balance is

more nice and that it gives more to a Chicano culture. *So you think that a Chicano culture is more half and half, and Mexican American is more American?* Yeah, like more Americanized. Daniel, 1st Generation, HSI80

I wouldn't use that [Mexican American], I don't know, I like to think of myself as still more Mexican, and I don't think I'm exactly half and half, I think I'm still more Mexican than Mexican American. Christina, 1st Generation, HSI80

Both of these quotes illustrate how there is the sense that “Mexican American” is also associated, at least from the home-culture frame, with someone who is more “Americanized” and not as close to their Mexican ancestry, especially for those participants who are not second or third generation, but are applying a cultural focused interpretation on the label. It seems that these two assumptions (being U.S. born and more “American”) are also shared by the second and third generation participants who wanted to apply the label to themselves. For example. in the quote below, Christian, who is a third generation plus, says the following:

As a person I identify as a Mexican American, see my parents were both born in Texas and they moved around because they are farm laborers... I feel culturally I'm pretty much white, I have the white culture, but I can fit in with both cultures pretty well, expect for that I don't speak Spanish. My parents didn't teach us Spanish because they wanted us to learn English. My dad did want to teach us Spanish, but my mom said she really wanted us to learn English so that we would learn how to get by here. Christian, 3rd Generation, HSI40

Christian claims to use “Mexican American” and right away qualifies using his generational status where his parents are both U.S. born. Furthermore, he admits that he is pretty much “white” as he feels that he has the “white culture” and does not speak Spanish. This means that he associates with being more “Americanized.” For Christian then, he feels it appropriate to use “Mexican American” as it encompasses both of the

most common assumptions about “Americaness” and is seemingly comfortable in admitting that he felt closer to “white culture.” Overall, “Mexican American” comes off as a label that signals some sort of integration into white American culture. Thus, depending on the participants’ viewpoints on integration as a positive or a negative, they sought to either distance or accept the label “Mexican American.” The pressures to assimilate into the U.S. white mainstream culture is one of the major struggles that Latinos and Latinas face in the U.S. There are racial/ethnic identity labels that hint at “Mexican-ness” and “American-ness.” However, this way of thinking is unlike Alejandra in the following quote, who admits using “Mexican American,” but will use “Hispanic” more often because she is more connected to Mexican culture (even though she admits later she does not use the label “Mexican” because of associated stigma later discussed).

I describe myself as Mexican American. Um, but I mainly identify with my characteristics traits as Hispanic, like Mexican more. It’s so hard, um how do I say, when I’m in Mexico I feel a part of it, I really feel like I fit in with that life style like you live simple... Yeah that’s how I would identify. *So do you use “Mexican American” when people ask what you are in day to day life?* When people ask me... um, I just say Hispanic actually. I do. Why? Um, [4 second pause] I think it’s just easier, I mean it’s the majority here. (Alejandra, 3rd Generation, HSI80)

As you can see, “Mexican American” from the home-culture frame for Latinos of Mexican origin suggests that it represents someone who is (1) U.S. born and (2) “Americanized,” or someone who is many generations removed from his or her immigrant ancestors. These assumptions were used by all generations and probably used by many participants, especially the second and third generation, because of the negative association with being too “Americanized” that many did not want to project at least in

front of other Latinos like Alejandra in the above quote that prefers to use “Hispanic” even compared with “Mexican American.” Overall, the findings for “Mexican American” suggest that it is a label not utilized very often and was not discussed in much more depth compared with other labels.

“Chicanos are Poor People, Cholos... No Way, It means you’re Americanized”

The label “Chicano/a” is the least used label by participants in this study for three main reasons. “Chicano/a” is associated with (1) a negative label among Latinos and Latinas that represented another Latino who had become so Americanized they could not (or refused to) connect with Mexican culture or even speak Spanish. (2) “Chicano/a” is seen as a label that was outdated and was related to a social movement with which the participants could not identify. Lastly, (3) “Chicano/a” is also associated with people of lower socioeconomic status and is thus not seen favorably by some Latinos and Latinas who were not working class. In the entire sample, only two individuals actually identified as Chicano. Their reasons for choosing this label and how they used it are discussed towards the end of this section. Overall, the label, “Chicano/a,” can be seen as a dying label among millennials. This is should be a concern to the future of Chicano Studies on campuses where students cannot identify with the racial/ethnic identity label, or at least not in a positive way.

Below we have a quote from Blanca who illustrates an example of the most popular reason why students, especially those who were U.S. born, did not want to associate themselves with the label “Chicano/a.”

I guess it is more kinda of me... it closely identifies with me but it has a more negative connotation to where... there was a movie that explained this really

well. “Under the Same Moon.” There is a part where there is a girl and she wants to get money and so she asks this lady if she can smuggle something over the border for her since she says that she is like, “I’m Hispanic but I’m American and so they won’t question me as much.” And so they were trying to communicate but she couldn’t speak Spanish, and so the lady was like, “ah *pinche Chicana*”, and so a Chicana is someone that in my opinion is of Mexican or Latin descent but doesn’t have that cultural tie, doesn’t speak the language, is more Americanized, and so to me that’s a negative connotation. They choose that identification. (Blanca, 3rd Generation, PWI)

Blanca received the visual message from a film about how Mexican people are assumed to view Chicanos as people who are so Americanized that they cannot even speak Spanish. As a third plus generation U.S. born Latina, Blanca expresses her struggles in other parts of the interview with friendships and a sense of community with first and second generation Latinas at PWI. Blanca does not speak Spanish very well and had a hard time communicating in Spanish or sharing the bond with Mexican music and pop culture with the rest of her second and first generation Mexican friends. Blanca had a great desire to connect with her Mexican background but admitted that not speaking Spanish made her feel separated from her race. Thus, Blanca resisted the label “Chicana” because as a third generation person trying to make connections with first and second generation Mexicans it was extremely important to show that she was not “Americanized” and always felt they were judging her lack of “Mexican-ness.” Below is similar example from Angelica.

Oh, I don’t like it [Chicano]. I feel like that’s, I don’t know why but I feel like it’s taking away part of your culture. Like when my parents would talk about Chicanos they would say like oh it’s cause they are Chicanos and they barely speak Spanish and they are the borderline of Mexican I guess. My mom would say oh she’s Chicana and she thinks she’s all that because she is here [U.S.]. (Angelica, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Angelica is a second generation Latina who also does not speak Spanish very well. During the interview, she also expresses how she is trying to make connections with other Mexican-born Latinos and Latinas at the predominantly white institution, but is struggling. Angelica's quote shows once again the level of influence that parents and family have in the meanings behind racial and/or ethnic identity labels. Angelica's parents, who are first generation, viewed "Chicano" as something very negative, someone who didn't know Spanish and possibly even thought of himself or herself as superior because of being from or born in the U.S. This is a classic tension between Mexican immigrants and American born Mexicans in the struggle that has existed since the creation of the border that so many authors and researchers have written about (Ochoa 2004; Sanchez 1993; Vasquez 2011). Ironically, for Latinos and Latinas such as Blanca and especially Angelica, the negative associations placed on being Americanized that are expressed by their own parents put stress on the second and third generation children's ability to function between two worlds. This is the case especially for those Latinos and Latinas interested in trying to maintain a connection with their Mexican roots rather than completely integrating into white American culture, norms, and beliefs. The negative stigma and interpretation of "Chicano/a" as someone who is Americanized clearly comes from a version of the home-culture frame within the cultural understandings of Latinos and Latinas, as it is doubtful the white racial frame would see the distinctions in the same way.

The second reason participants did not want to identify as “Chicano/a” was more class based. “Chicano/a” was associated with negative stereotypes of being poor or, as Sonia puts it in the following quote, “ghetto.”

I feel like [Chicano] that’s used like in Spanish pop songs, and so it’s like ghetto, and I hear Pit Bull say it all the time. That’s why I wouldn’t use it. (Sonia, 3rd Generation, PWI)

The stigmas associated with “ghetto” can go further beyond class issues related to money to include assumptions about being uneducated, associated with gangs, and other stereotypes. Considering the origin of the label “Chicano/a” as one that came largely from the working class struggle of Mexican Latinos in the U.S., it is clear how this interpretation can exist. However, the origin of the label was about working class pride in their culture and their ability to survive their struggle within the U.S. Below we have another quote that further shows the class distinctions among Latinos and Latinas.

No I don’t identify with that. My parents have seen that as a derogatory label. It’s cause that’s a different kind of people, that’s what they say right. The people that have been living in the U.S. for a long time, lower socio-economic. Like my family related Chicano to Pachuco, and that’s how my parents relate it to, my parents not me, but that’s what I thought of when you asked. Chicanos are also people that have been here for many generations. (Arturo, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Arturo first references his parents and how they see “Chicano/a” as a derogatory label. Arturo’s parents are first generation Mexicans and are quite wealthy, both having dentist careers in Mexico. Once again, the conflict between U.S. born Latinos and Mexican immigrants’ perceptions of U.S. born Latinos are expressed, but again an added stigma is the lower socioeconomic status assumption. The Pachuco has also had its place in Mexican American history; it has represented a divide between immigrants and the U.S.

born and can be understood as the beginnings of the history of Chicanos. Arturo's parents seem to have explained this to him and have clearly influenced his view of what the label "Chicano/a" represents among Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin. The pressure on some second and even third generation Latinos to not "loose" their "Mexican-ness" is strong the quotes above illustrate how that pressure can even form indirectly from family members who teach children the meanings behind racial/ethnic identity labels that are also tied to generational and class based interpretations.

Finally, we will look at two participants who did state that they use "Chicano/a" as an identity. Of course, this also was shaped by context and audience, but unlike all the other participants who state that they never used the label, these two participants admitted to using it. It is important to focus on these two participants because, unlike the labels "Latino/a," which are popularized in the media, and "Hispanic," which is imposed by government and other U.S. institutions, "Chicano/a" is a label of resistance that represents the struggle of the working class American-born Latinos and Latinas. The origin of the label is tied to a movement that sought to bring change to the oppression of the U.S. born, but also later in the movement sought to make connections with Mexicans beyond the U.S. border. This label is not going to be promoted in U.S. institutions the same ways as the other two ("Latino/a and "Hispanic"). Understanding not only why Latinos and Latinas do not identify with "Chicano/a" but also knowing why others do is vitally important for future theory and scholarship associated with Chicano Studies on college and university campuses.

Both students who identify as Chicano are from the Hispanic Serving Institution with 80 percent Latinos. Both stated that they have used either information from their classes or other resources from the institution to investigate what the label “Chicano” meant, as they had not grown up using or even really hearing the label. Their first knowledge of this label occurred during their research and studies in college. The first quote is from Ruben, who is a first generation Latino who had been born and lived in Mexico but had been in U.S. schools since elementary school.

I consider myself Chicano. My family is Mexican, but I was raised here, all my life I've spoken Spanish... And that was barley last year that I started [calling myself Chicano], I mean my interest in the Mexican culture has always been there, but... I was interested in Mexican literary value and poetry, and the art. I really like to focus more on Mexican art and culture, than focusing on the Chicano movement... Well as Chicano I am right in the middle, I am Mexican, I can go to Mexico and feel slightly comfortable, like I can go and speak Spanish, and understand their cultural values, but I can't say I'm a full Mexican because I didn't grow up with them, like I don't have a love for soccer, you know. I'm not a full percent Mexican, but I know I am Mexican. I'm not full percent American, but at the same time I'm 50 50. That's why see myself as a Chicano. I say it as a matter of being proud. Like if I say I'm Mexican American I'm just saying I'm half and half, but when I say I'm Chicano I say I appreciate my culture and all Mexican Americans, and supporting them. That's why I say Chicano. (Ruben, 1st Generation, HSI80)

Interestingly, Ruben is not the pure definition of Chicano as someone who was born in the U.S. side or was several generations removed from Mexico as he was first generation, but he still feels that he has a connection and expresses that connection to the Mexican culture through literature, poetry, and art and not through the Chicano Movement per se. Clearly, Ruben can identify with the label from his cultural lived experiences and interests rather than the history of the label tied to the movement. A

similar example comes from Daniel who is also a Mexican-born Latino who received the majority of his adult education across the border in the U.S.

My first years I would describe myself as Mexican, all through high school because I lived there. And then when I came to school here I learned about Chicano heritage and Chicano culture and I realized that I fit more into that ethnic group because I have both American and Mexican cultural heritage, so I fit in the Chicano culture. For other means I'll claim to be more Mexican than American, but I feel like I fit into that Chicano. *So when other people ask what are you do you say Chicano?* I'll say just Mexican just to avoid explanations, you know. I'll say, oh I'm Mexican. In everyday conversation I would say I'm just Mexican, but for college purposes, and more serious stuff I guess, like in a class if they ask me how identify I will say Chicano, or for like this study I will say Chicano, but if I meet you in the street and you say oh you look Mexican, I'll say I'm Mexican. (Daniel, 1st Generation HSI80)

Once again, in Daniel's quote we see the influence of college in introducing the label "Chicano" since Daniel had spent most of his younger years in the Mexican education system. But Daniel shows how he practices identity management to a certain extent and does not show that there is a stigma associated with the label., Rather, he uses "Mexican" to avoid explanations, as though "Chicano/a" requires further explanation outside of the classroom or college. In other parts of the interview, Daniel recounted his many encounters with border patrol agents on both sides of the border and stated that "Mexican" or "American" were common labels used in those interactions.

It seems that those two participants who did use the label “Chicano” to self-identify in certain situations used it after they learned about it through adult education, and even though both of these individuals were Mexican born, they did not see that stopping them from claiming “Chicano” to describe their racial/ethnic identity in the cultural sense of being both Mexican and American. Further investigation is needed on college campuses and even high schools on the label “Chicano.” It is clear that is a label that is often taught later in life, perhaps through Chicano Studies programs. Furthermore, in this section, it seemed that Latino and Latina home-culture or even Mexican culture frames from Mexico greatly influenced why study participants were not choosing “Chicano/a.” However, it is important to show that those who identified with “Chicano” were attending HSI80. Later chapters will show how the space of HSI80 was the least white of all three institutions. Furthermore, HSI80s supported Mexican culture in more institutional ways, such as supporting wide use of Spanish and incorporating several courses and programs that specifically focus on the Latino community. Latinos in this environment would be more likely to develop a positive orientation towards “Chicano.”

“You Have to Be Careful Who You Say ‘Mexican’ To”

“Mexican” is the second most popular label used in this study to racially/ethnically self-identify, regardless of participants’ generational status. As mentioned in previous sections, the popularity of the label is attributed to the preference for specificity of culture and ancestry among Latinos and Latinas. That is, Latinos and Latinas prefer to be specific when they racially/ethnically self-identify, and labels like “Latino/a” and “Hispanic” are too general, as they homogenize different Latino groups.

Despite the popularity of the label “Mexican,” participants also revealed practicing identity management by being selective in to whom they said they were “Mexican.” Findings reveal that participants were (1) aware of the negative stereotypes and stigmas associated with “Mexican” that stem from the white racial frame, and thus were wary of using “Mexican” in front of someone they suspected was a believer of such stereotypes. And (2), Latinos and Latinas (especially the second and third generation) were also wary of self-identifying as “Mexican” in front of Mexican born individuals, as it was a general understanding among them that “real Mexicans” are born in Mexico and speak Spanish.

The following quote further illustrates the reason why an individual would be careful of using “Mexican” to self-identify in a conversation with strangers.

I say I’m Mexican, but my only concern is that my idea [of Mexican] is not the same as the person I’m talking to. That person may have a different concept of what Mexican is, that’s my only concern... I don’t use exactly their race but how educated they are also tells what I say, ah... obviously some people have certain ideas about what Mexican is, they are not very pleasant. *Like what?* I don’t know, cause, obviously, some people associate Mexican with immigration and that sort of stuff, and beans and stuff like that... It is associated with like not having any documents. *So how do you delabeline how educated someone is?* [laughs] ah how they speak, how they dress. *Can you describe what an educated person is then?* Well maybe educated is not the best label, but someone who is aware of... someone who is not so stereotypic, someone who can welcome new ideas, you know? Someone who is not like stubborn, or I don’t know... Someone who won’t automatically associate Mexican with you know. *But how can you tell?* I take a guess, you are trying to give the best impression as you can, and you want to come off as favorably as you can. And that just depends on the person, there is no correct or strict system. (Eric, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Eric admits earlier in the interview that he is comfortable saying “Mexican” only with friends, which is something other respondents also suggest. Participants reported having “secret” or “personal” labels they truly did identify with, but they would use these only in the presence of friends or family who they knew were not going to ridicule

them or judge them for choosing the label. For example, a third generation Latino really wanting to identify as Mexican would only say so to his friends who would not tell him he was not Mexican because he was U.S. born. But in the quote above, Eric feels that the person's race is not necessarily what helps him decide to whom he is going to identify as "Mexican," but he also struggles with explaining exactly the type of person to whom he decides to identify as "Mexican." In the end, he boils it down to someone who is going to be more open, not stereotypic, not stubborn, educated, and liberal. Eric is well aware, as research has also found, that "Mexican" in the U.S. has come to be synonymous with foreigner, immigrant, and even undocumented or "illegal" "alien" (Ochoa 2004).

Additionally, Eric explains the reason why Latinos or Latinas go through this identity management to begin with. It is all about trying to give the best impression and present oneself as favorably as possible. Overall, this quote illustrates the complexity in the guessing game that Latinos and Latinas face when trying to decide which label to use to create the best impression. For the students in the previous section, their automatic go-to for whites, then, was simply "Hispanic," whereas Eric here shows a bit more nuance in trying to go beyond using the assumed race of the person with whom you are interacting as a marker because he feels that "there is no strict system" for him. Other research has shown that it is possible for other people of color (including Latinos themselves) to believe in the stereotypes and stigmas attached to their own group that were originally created by the white racial frame. Below is another quote from Alejandra who also expresses similar reservations about using "Mexican," compared with "Hispanic," to self-identify.

Um, Mexican? I don't know I, I use Hispanic, I guess I could use Mexican, but Mexican sometimes has like um, it's not that I don't want to associate with it, but it has labels related to it. *Like what?* Like I could use it but I don't want people to automatically think that... how do I explain it, let me think... [10 second pause] Like when you say Mexican it's all you know, and when you say you're Mexican people say oh so your family is from Mexico, a lot of people, um, it's like a stereotypes to be Mexican. Like a lot of people have different backgrounds and a lot of different things, and just being characterized like Mexican is sometimes derogatory, so I think a lot of people say I'm Latina or Hispanic. *Do you think they are trying to avoid a negative stereotype?* Yeah. *What do you think some of those negative stereotypes are that are associated with Mexican?* Like uneducated, they have kids early in life, for women, and they usually grew up in poverty or in the barrio or something. (Alejandra, 3rd Generation HSI80)

Alejandra is well aware of additional stereotypes associated with the label “Mexican” that come from the white racial frame, including being uneducated, poor, and women having out-of-control fertility. Alejandra thus admits that she would rather use “Hispanic” than “Mexican” to avoid those associations. Furthermore, Alejandra suggests that there are others who do that same, who would rather use a label like “Hispanic” or “Latino” to escape the stigma and stereotypes associated with the label “Mexican.” However, the association of “Mexican” with these stereotypes did not stop “Mexican” from being the most used label to racially/ethnically self-identify for Latinos and Latinas in this study. What the stigma did affect was where and to whom you said you were Mexican for most participants compared with choosing another label such as “Hispanic,” which has already been established as the least threatening label.

There were additional reasons why a Latino or Latina would be wary of using “Mexican” in front of other Mexican origin people. “Mexican” is understood even among Latinos and Latinas to somehow suggest that one is born in Mexico or currently living in Mexico. The participants who felt this was the case were often the second and

third generation who had at some point in their lives tried to use “Mexican” to self-identify but had been corrected by other Mexican-born individuals who were usually family. For example, the quote below illustrates these points as Angelica answers when she uses the label “Mexican” to self-identify.

Well it depends on the crowd. Yeah! Well like if you’re with some people who are not minorities, who are not Hispanic, whites, I would say that I’m Mexican. But if I’m with Hispanics I’ll say that my parents are from Mexico or something like that just so they understand that I am Latina, Hispanic. I try to put that in there somehow, because when you try to tell someone that you’re Mexican, they say, “Oh so you’re born in Mexico?” And I’ll say no. “Oh so you’re from there, where are you from?” And I say so, no my parents are from there, and then they say “Oh well you’re really not Mexican. You’re American because you’re here.” So its kinda like [shrug and disappointment tsk]... like when people start talking about going to Mexico, and I don’t go that often because my parents don’t have to, so when people start talking about Mexico and how fun it is and all things that there is to do, I start to kinda stay quiet and I feel like I shouldn’t even comment on it cause I don’t know what they are talking about, so I feel that it does kinda take away from it a little bit, but they are still my roots and I am very proud of it, even though I’m not, I don’t know like involved of know a lot about it. (Angelica, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Angelica’s interaction with other Mexican-origin individuals, especially those who are first generation, is typical for second and third generation Latinos and Latinas. Angelia is second generation and earlier in the interview explains that she also does not speak Spanish very well. She has an interest in connecting with other Mexican-origin students at the predominantly white institution, yet she admitted that this is often complicated because of the in and out groups among Mexican Latinos and Latinas. Angelica’s quote highlights how “Mexican” among Latinos and Latinas can mean that someone is specifically either born or currently from Mexico or involved in Mexican politics or culture. Furthermore, the ability to speak Spanish was also a very important part of a Latino or Latina trying to claim that they were “Mexican.” For example, the

following quote by David states that being able to speak Spanish is a key part of claiming to be “Mexican,” which is why he has difficulties not being able to speak Spanish.

It’s their [Mexican] language and when people spoke to me in Spanish and I didn’t respond that way, they called me a “coconut.” Like brown on the outside, white on the inside. And so when they [Mexicans] come over here and speak their language its something that connects them back to their culture and heritage. So I can see good reasons for why I would want to speak Spanish.... I say yes [Spanish is an important part of claiming a “Mexican” identity], and I hate to say no, because I don’t speak Spanish but yet I still claim the Hispanic and Latino part of America. If someone were to come to me and say you can’t be a part of this I would have to say you’re wrong. I wasn’t given a choice, it was put upon me, not even that it was just how things played out. So I think people do hold it [against me], but I don’t think that it should be. Cause I know other Mexicans that don’t speak Spanish, and they are considered coconuts. But then again I’m thinking of some friends from the barrio, who are more hood, and those people would call me not Mexican at all. I mean I say it is, but I wish it was no. (David, 2nd Generation, HSI40)

Once again, in this quote we see the importance of being able to speak Spanish for those of Mexican origin in claiming that “Mexican” identity. David clearly sees himself as a member of another group by referring to Mexican immigrants as “their language,” stating that “they call me a coconut,” and, most importantly, referring to Spanish as the language that connects Mexican immigrants back to their culture and heritage when they come from Mexico. Language was a major factor that kept the second and third generation Latinos and Latinos from also claiming they were “Hispanic” or “Latino” but especially from claiming that they were “Mexican.” The ridicule that the second and third generation could potentially face as well was clear in David’s quote as he recount being called “coconut,” which is a way that Latinos refer to the “Americanization” of someone who is Latino or “brown on the inside, but white on

the inside.” As has been shown over and over again in this chapter, being “Americanized” is something that not very many Latinos and Latinas in this study wanted to show or associate themselves with. Thus, it becomes clear that Latino and Latina participants were making very conscious decisions based on their understandings of their place in the social structure, both from the perspective of the white racial frame and the home-culture frame, when deciding on when or if to use “Mexican” to racially/ethnically self-identify.

Conclusion

Overall, this dissertation study finds that Latino and Latina participants are practicing racial/ethnic identity management. Identity management includes Latinos and Latinas (1) using multiple racial and/or ethnic labels to identify themselves and (2) changing their identity label depending on the context of the situation or racial background/nationality of the other individual(s) in the social interaction. Furthermore, the nuances of having to work through multiple frames comes through and strongly supports the idea that Latinos and Latinas, like other people of color, are multi-framers, meaning they work from both the white racial frame and the home-culture frame (Feagin 2010b; O’Brien 2008a). Within the white racial frame, the labels “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Hispanic,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican” do not all mean the same thing. It is clear that Latino and Latina participants were clear that there was a sort of hierarchy related to stigma for white Americans that shaped the racial/ethnic identity label that Latinos and Latinas choose to use to self-identify depending on context and audience.

“Hispanic” is the least threatening label from the white racial frame. This is because “Hispanic” (1) is a label that is pronounced in English, (2) has its origin and history linked to the U.S. Census Bureau and thus is used and promoted by U.S. institutions, (3) homogenizes Latinos so that knowledge of different cultures is not necessary, and (4) is understood (even from the home-culture frame) to represent someone who is U.S. born. For all these reasons, “Hispanic” is the least threatening label for Latinos and Latinas to use. This is probably why it is also the most popular label used to identify oneself within formal documentation and even for whites or non-Latinos. Yet, “Hispanic” is also an imposed label as Latinos and Latinas in this study did not use this label to express meaningful connections to their ancestry or culture. The resistance to the label varies greatly. The second most popular label used for self-identification was “Mexican,” although it came with its own set of rules for when and with whom it could be used.

Additionally, we find that “Latino/a,” from within the white racial frame, is more stigmatized compared with “Hispanic” as “Latino” does imply that it is referring to someone who is in resistance, who is proud of his/her background as a Latino. This label has been taken as a threat by white America keeping a watchful eye and promoting assimilation. The history and origin of the label “Latino” is rooted in resistance, but, unfortunately, the participants of this study did not seem aware of this history and instead opted not to use the label very often to refer to themselves. “Latino/a” within the home-culture frame is not used by first generation Latinos. Thus it is less likely that second generation Latinos would use it for themselves as they saw it more as a pop

culture or “TV” label. Thus, it was also unclear from within the home-culture frame if “Latino/a” represented someone who was foreign born, especially someone from Latin America, especially South America.

On the other hand, “Mexican American” was also not a very popular label as it came with the assumption from within the home-culture frame that a “Mexican American” was someone that had to be born in the U.S. and be several generations removed from their immigrant ancestors, or someone who was just too “Americanized.” Overall, Latinos and Latinas in this study, regardless of generational status or even Spanish speaking capabilities, all shied away from using labels that hinted they were too “Americanized.” “Chicano” is another label that is used the least among all participants. Only two participants admitted using this label to racially/ethnically self-identify. Yet, “Mexican” was the second most used label among participants even though it is a very strongly stigmatized label from within the white racial frame. “Mexican” was preferred because it was the most specific label that Latinos and Latinas could use to connect to a specific cultural background or country of origin.

It was common in this dissertation study to hear statements suggesting that some participants used “personal” racial and/or ethnic identity only with friends or family. Similarly, other labels that were considered more “formal” or even less stigmatized were used publically for strangers or people whom the participants felt would not respond well to a more stigmatized label, or knew that a particular label meant something very specific to national or generational status among Latinos and Latinas. Overall, the internal negotiation is very complex and nuanced as Latinos and Latinas are

using both frames (the dominant white racial frame and a Home-culture or Resistance Frame) to interpret the positive and negative meanings associated with the racial/ethnic identity labels, “Latino/a,” “Chicano/a,” “Hispanic,” “Mexican American,” and “Mexican.” At the same time participants were also internally evaluating where they fall personally in labels of cultural and ancestral background relative to others in their in and out groups. This phenomena of identity management is a perfect example of how identity and the social structure are two sides of the same coin with internal and external forces affecting how an individual racially/ethnically self-identifies.

CHAPTER V

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One of this dissertation's guiding questions focuses on how Latino and Latina students of Mexican origin understand and explain the racism/discrimination they may encounter on campus. Previous research finds that Latinos and Latinas tend to differ in their reporting of racist experiences in survey data. Certain groups, such as first generation Latinos, may actually be under reporting these types of experiences as it is speculated that they may not be as well aware of the racial history in the U.S. to be able to identify racist behaviors or comments (Telles and Ortiz 2008). This chapter demonstrates how Latino and Latina participants have a variety of ways of discussing and interpreting experiences and the overall concept of racism and discrimination.

Similarly, like other research, the collecting of experiences of racism or discrimination faced some difficulties. For one, words like "race" and "racism" are trigger terms and make some individuals uncomfortable and therefore less likely to be open about those experiences. This makes it especially difficult for researchers collecting data on racism and discrimination. In the case of this dissertation study, asking questions related to racism and discrimination clearly made several students uncomfortable to talk negatively about their institution or anyone affiliated with the institutions such as staff, faculty, or even other students. Remember that the participants in this study can decline to respond to any question at any time and/or terminate the

interview. None the participants declined responses or terminated interviews, but did answer questions related to racism and discrimination.

This chapter divides findings into two main parts. The first part looks at how Latino and Latina participants defined racism and discrimination, and the second part analyzes the ways students discussed their racist and discrimination experiences that varied based on their backgrounds and which institution they are enrolled in (PWI, HSI40, or HSI80). It is important to future studies investigating experiences of racism and discrimination to understand how Latino and Latina millennials understand and discuss racism and discrimination. Despite the claims of the U.S. being a post-racial society, it is clear that structural racism continues to exist in many institutions, including higher education. Part of finding solutions and making positive changes to how students of color experience higher education is understanding these experiences and the strategies they employ to cope with day-to-day racism.

Latinos' and Latinas' Colorblind Framing of Racism and Discrimination

Part of the interview asks students to define and provide an example of racism and racial discrimination. The purpose of collecting this data is to gain insight into the perceptions of Latino and Latina millennials from various backgrounds and geographical areas. Previous research covered in Chapter II Theoretical Framework and Methodology shows that millennials tend to use a mainstream and colorblind conceptual understanding of “racism” and “discrimination.” Furthermore, as covered in Chapter II, there are many conceptual interpretations of “racism” and “discrimination” depending on theoretical

frameworks. The less critical conceptual interpretations of racism and discrimination are within colorblind frameworks most often found in mainstream media in the U.S.

This dissertation study finds similar results to other millennial studies. Latino and Latina participants in this dissertation study use colorblind and mainstream conceptual interpretations to define and explain racism and discrimination. Recall that millennials of all races tend to use mainstream and colorblind interpretations of racism (white millennials do so at a slightly higher rate than those of color) (Apollon 2011). In fact, many millennials (especially whites) have difficulty defining what racism is and are reluctant to apply it to institutional and structural interpretations (Apollon 2011). The pervasiveness of colorblind and mainstream interpretations of racism and discrimination are evident in this research that looks at the mainstream discourse in politics and other U.S. institutions (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Doane 2006; Feagin 2010b). This colorblind interpretation of racism and discrimination is central to America's mainstream discourse on race relations, which is highly influenced by affluent white Americans and can be adopted by people of color even though colorblind and mainstream interpretations are not beneficial to people of color (Feagin 2010b).

Recall that Chapter II shows how mainstream and colorblind interpretations of racism tend to include the following views about racism and racial discrimination: (1) Racism is perpetrated by individual actors, just a few "bad apples" that are left in this world, and is not an institutional or systemic issue in the U.S. Thus, racism is experienced largely at the interpersonal level between individuals. (2) Racism and discrimination are about difference. Thus, racism and especially discrimination occur

whenever attention is brought to differences between racial groups, and whenever one is treated differently than another one. This is a hyper awareness and skewed interpretation of “equality” that takes into consideration past and present power dynamics among social groups. Under this logic, reverse racism and discrimination against whites can be argued. Finally, (4) racism is a declining issue in the U.S. since the Civil Rights movement. These views overlap to form a seemingly logical, but very skewed interpretation of not only racism and discrimination but of race relations as whole in the U.S.

Likewise, recall that critical interpretations of racism include not only interpersonal but also structural, institutional, and overall systemic understandings of how racism is maintained and reproduced through individuals and groups of power with interests in maintaining systems of oppression. Furthermore, this logic allows racism and discrimination to be seen as a contemporary issue and not something of the past. Additionally, a critical interpretation is aware of historical and contemporary trends of power and the racial hierarchy in the U.S. It goes a step further to recognize the role of whites who have always placed themselves at the top of the hierarchy, and for a large part of history, created and supported a system that benefited their racial group and oppressed others. This system includes not only social norms but also laws and policies that grant them the most access to social resources as a collective group with a legacy that lives on today.

As mentioned above, this dissertation finds that, overall, Latino and Latinas in this study use mainstream and colorblind conceptual interpretations of racism and

discrimination, regardless of their institution (PWI or HSI), background characteristics (generational status, Spanish speaking abilities, SES), or geographical location. Two major themes reflect the colorblind and mainstream interpretations outlined below. However, note that in many ways these viewpoints overlap and thus more than one theme may be found in any one selection of quotes. Themes include: (1) Racism is almost exclusively defined at the interpersonal level with a heavy focus on verbal assaults such as name calling (slurs), racial jokes, and using racial stereotypes to judge others. And (2) there is an “intentionality” or “deliberate” component to an individual’s behavior seeking to offend a racial group in order to consider the behavior (action or comment) racist. The following quotes illustrate examples of this from the Latino and Latina participants of Mexican origin in this study.

The majority of the participants (all but two) define and explain racism at the interpersonal level only. That is, participants never make connections to structural, institutional, or systemic understandings of racism on their own. This is not say that participants do not recognize structural, institutional, or systemic forms of racism. This only suggests the strong influence of mainstream colorblind rhetoric affecting how participants initially describe racism and racial discrimination. To define racism or discrimination solely at the interpersonal level is colorblind as it ignores structural or systemic explanations and focuses on racism only at the individual level. This viewpoint presents contemporary racism as the actions and thoughts of those few “bad” individuals left in a post racial society.

Take For example the following student responses when asked to define racism. These quotes illustrate how racism is defined at the interpersonal level and overwhelmingly as verbal assaults, such as name calling, talking about another race, saying mean things, slurs, offensive jokes about race, and using racial stereotypes.

Racism? [silent for 10 seconds] oh that's kinda hard... for me... racism would be probably **talking bad about another race**, disliking another kind of people like blacks or whites. **Disliking them** for no reason, or probably there is a reason behind but it is just going to seem racist. (Jesus., 2nd Generation, PWI)

Racism? um... [5 second thinking] people... getting.. um **being made fun of because of their race**, and **people say mean things about how they identify themselves**, that kind of thing. That's what racism is. I guess all those **racist jokes**. Well I guess even terms, like 'Beaner', and like for well like Black people or 'wetback' or things like that... it's all pretty racist... or like 'go work in the fields'. (Priscilla, 2nd Generation, HSI40)

The two quotes above also illustrate the difficulty that participants have defining or providing examples of racism. Overall, the definitions are rather weak due to their lack of clarity and ambiguity. For example, the constant use of "they" and "people" or the ambiguity in explanations like "talking bad about another race," "acting out," or, "being negative." When I noticed participants falling into these ambiguities, I would question them for more clarity. However, there was a point in the interviewing process when I realized that, especially for those participants who were chronically ambiguous in their responses, my constant probing only made them more uncomfortable and could be irritating to some. Thus, I limited my probing within reason and accepted that the students' chronic ambiguity and lack of clarity were part of the major findings that showed how millennials find it difficult to define racism and discrimination.

To better illustrate the differences between critical interpretations of racism/ discrimination and colorblind, mainstream interpretations of racism, below are the only critical and structural interpretations of racism given by participants of this dissertation study. Not only do these students define and conceptualize racism in structural terms, they also apply it to their own lived experiences. This is challenging, as it requires critical thinking skills to make connections between one's personal experiences and the world. Note the students are all asked the exact same question to define racism and provide a possible example.

I feel like racism means, when opportunities are not offered to people because of their race, like their skin color. I'm trying to apply it to campus.... I don't know... cause here, everyone is here because of their education and credentials. I guess if I go back further, **it's the opportunities based on where you live, like how good your education is in high school compared to a private school in a white area of town.** And like my high school, there wasn't a lot of funding and I think their education suffered because of that. **I feel like at my high school there wasn't as many opportunities, or support. Like the north side of town there was a white school.** (Carina, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Carina applies the concepts of systemic racism back to residential segregation issues where resources like quality education are controlled based on who has access to better and safer neighborhoods with more affluence. Additionally, Carina recognizes the racial disparities she has noticed in her own life where the white school on the north side of town had better resources, support, and opportunities for their students compared with her school, which earlier in the interview she claimed was predominantly Latino and Black. Here is the final example of a critical interpretation of racism.

I define racism as the race in power. The group has to be in power, because they have the power to wield their power, their labels, and their will... **the privilege that Europeans have is more related to power.** For example, **what**

happened in third grade to me, how she [the teacher] would separate people into two groups, white people and Mexican people. I mean she was someone in that institution wielding that power. Had that teacher been Mexican could they have done the same thing? I don't think so. I think that is the best example from my life. (Cristian, 3+ Generation HIS40)

Cristian in this case also provides a critical and structural interpretation of racism as linked to power and the ability to wield power. Cristian also recognizes white privilege as the ability to use your "power." He uses an example from his past where a white teacher segregated seating arrangements in the classroom between Mexican students and white students. Cristian admits that at a very young age he became aware of how undesirable it was to be Mexican due to experiences at school from white teachers and children. Cristian is a social science major, Carina is not. Several other social science majors in this study failed to provide critical interpretations and definitions of racism. Thus, it needs to be further researched why so few millennials are able to explain racism and discrimination critically. At this point, evidence points to the pervasiveness of colorblind and mainstream interpretations that affect millennials' perceptions, even for those of color.

Moreover, a related theme that appears quite often in the more colorblind interpretations of racism includes the constant reference to racial joking (racist jokes). Racial joking is something that almost all participants mention and fall on different ends of the spectrum in terms of the acceptability or appropriateness of the jokes. This points to the strong presence or perhaps frequency of these types of jokes in participants' lives. For example, consider Angelica's response below to the question, "What is racism?"

It's like being negative. Like even, I don't know... like if they... I don't know... I don't know how to describe one... racism I think I define it more like, like I

don't know, **cause sometimes they do it joking around, there are jokes, but sometimes if someone gets offended, sometimes some people don't mean it, like they mean it to be funny, not to offend someone.** But racism is like more hatred toward a race like more stereotypical things. Angelica, 2nd Generation, 19 (PWI)

Angelica's quote above demonstrates the difficulty students experience explaining racial joking. Angelica, like other participants, struggles to make sense of when a racial joke is acceptable and when or if the joke is racist. Angelica first mentions these jokes as an example of racism, but then tries to rationalize when these jokes are ok and meant to be funny versus offensive. Some students express being more accepting of racial jokes so long as no one is "intentionally being offensive." The issue of "intention to be racist or offensive" is a key point in several definitions in **bold** below. For example, the following quote suggests this interpretation of racism through racial joking.

Racism is a deliberate... ah...I guess what's the word.... A **deliberate comment or joke or action made to exclude or make fun of a certain race.** More malicious intent even though it can be a joke, but even a joke has underlying issues. (Blanca, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Oh racism, anything you do or say against a person of whatever race, with **intent of being offensive.** [Like] Negative stereotypes like I said before, Mexicans are lazy, Asians are good at math. (Daniel, 1st Generation, HSI80)

Something with **intent of malice**, or coming out of ignorance, I think... like the joke about what I just said with my friends, I do that on purpose, you know, to push your buttons. We are not trying to be rude to each other. Racism would be something with malicious intent or out of ignorance that you would make someone feel bad. That would be racism. (Arturo, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Hmmm, [thinks 5 seconds] I guess [thinks 6 seconds] when you... ah.... Like refer to a person of another race... **in a way that you want to hurt them**, by a saying. (Martina, 1st Generation HSI80)

Um, I guess it would be the **act of purposefully putting down another race and calling them inferior** to your own. I suppose something like purposefully,

pointing out the Hispanic in the street and saying like go mow your lawn. I'd call that racist. (Elisa, 3+ Generation, PWI)

All five of the above quotes focus on how actions, comments, or jokes need to have some form of intentionality to hurt or offend in order to be racist. What most of these students are missing is that regardless of the intention or even the people involved, if a joke/comment uses stereotypes and/or slurs, then the comment/joke is racist. This is because the stereotypes and slurs are not devoid of history. The white racial frame argues that stereotypes are an important part of the frame and have been developed for several groups of color to demean and justify why people of color deserve a subordinate or even sub-human status (Feagin 2010b). People of color did not create these stereotypes or slurs about themselves. Yet, almost the majority of students in this dissertation study admit (some more reluctantly than others) to taking part in racial joking either with other racial groups (most often whites) or among Latinos/ Mexicans. When Latinos or Latinas (or any group of color) apply these white created stereotypes or slurs to themselves (even if only "for fun") they are taking part in internalizing the imagery and rationales that the white racial frame uses to oppress and degrade people of color. Furthermore, even if these racist jokes/comments are done with white friends who are "just being funny," the effect is the same as Latinos and Latinas are internalizing and whites are perpetuating the subordinate or sub-human status of people of color.

Why is it that Latinos and Latinas in this study misdirect their understanding of what makes racial jokes racist? The answer is that they are working within the mainstream colorblind frame to explain what racism is. For one thing, the mainstream and colorblind frame focuses on individuals being the perpetrators of racism (the "bad

apple”) and ignores the structural, institutional, and systemic ways that racism works without actors. Thus, intention is not always a necessity if there is a system of laws and social norms to reproduce racism regardless of intention. Second, the mainstream and colorblind frames have a way of serving whites more than people of color. This is because colorblind and mainstream frames allow whites to remain unnoticed and therefore largely ignore the role whites, as a collective group, have played in creating and maintaining systems of oppression. The logic of “intention” leaves room to excuse racist behavior, especially of whites, and even draws attention away from the historical role and purpose whites had in creating and spreading the racist stereotypes and slurs about people of color.

A large problem of using colorblind and mainstream interpretations of racism and discrimination is how it creates a warped understanding of what racism and discrimination are. Colorblind and other mainstream interpretations of racism and discrimination conceal the pervasiveness of structural, institutional, and overall systemic forms of racism and the white actors that have created this system of oppression in such a way that racism can continue without any actual actors. Furthermore, colorblind and other mainstream interpretations of racism serve whites as a collective group to allow them to count themselves as equally affected by racism and discrimination. The odd logic of colorblind and mainstream interpretations can be seen through these participants’ quotes that not only offer very weak definitions of racism and discrimination, but also show Latinos’ and Latinas’ struggle to make sense of their experiences and mainstream rationalizations, For example when racial joking is ok.

Colorblind and mainstream interpretations of racism and discrimination furthermore allow for some Latinos and Latinas to claim that they have never experienced racism or discrimination. The ways in which many of these Latinos and Latinas defined racism and discrimination led many to claim that they had never experienced either, yet continued in later parts of the interview to describe experiences they were at times reluctant to admit were racism or discrimination. From previous research that looks at how Latinos and Latinas report experiences of racism and discrimination we know that certain groups tend to severely underreport experiences. Earlier generations of Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. tend to have a harder time identifying racist interactions compared with later generational groups. This dissertation argues that it is the exposure to colorblind and mainstream interpretations of racism and discrimination that further allow for the under reporting of racist and discriminatory experiences no matter the background (more in depth discussion of this in following section below).

Coping Strategies in Discussing Racist and Discriminatory Experiences

The previous section discusses the way Latino and Latina participants use mainstream colorblind framing to define racism and racial discrimination initially. The following sections analyze the frames Latinos and Latinas used to create narratives about racism or discrimination in their own lives. After reading the previous section, we would expect that participants would continue to use colorblind framing in constructing narratives about their experiences. Remember that participants regardless of background, institution type, or even regional location used colorblind and mainstream frames to

define racism and racial discrimination. However, once participants get past the abstract conceptualizing of racism, many are able to identify racism and discrimination they have lived through.

Analyzing the experiences of racism and discrimination, this dissertation finds that Latinos and Latinas experience differences depending on the racial composition of their institution. For example, participants at PWI report the most experiences of racism with other white students in the classroom and on campus. Latinos at HSI80 have the lowest reports of experiences of racism in the classroom or on campus (almost none). However, HSI80 has many experiences to discuss when it comes to being off campus or leaving town. Finally, Latinos at HSI40 also report similar racist experiences in the classroom and on campus with white students as those from PWI. The details are further discussed in Chapter VI, but these findings relate to the following sections that show how Latinos and Latinas with differing backgrounds, and at the different institutions, create narratives about their experiences differently.

Overall, analysis shows that students at HSI80 tend to apply home-culture or even resistance framing to construct narratives about what has happened to them, and even elaborate more about how the experience relates to race relations overall. Whereas, the majority of the students from the PWI bring up experiences of racism or discrimination, but then attempt to rationalize or explain why the incident is not that bad and pardon the racist behavior of the perpetrator. Students at HSI40 varied. Those who report having more contact with white friends display similar narrative construction to those at the PWI, and those who report having more Latino friends construct narratives

more like those at HSI80. Thus, this dissertation claims that students at PWI (and those that report having more white friends at HSI40) tend to create narratives that help them cope with their experiences with constant exposure to racist situations and maintaining friendships or relationships with their white friends and peers, most often the perpetrators of these racist interactions.

Whereas, students at the HSI80 (and those with more Latino friends at HSI40 and the few at HSI80) came from backgrounds where they grew up with mostly Latino friends and are more exposed to home-culture and resistance framing. Furthermore, it may be easier for these students to be critical of their experiences because most often they are not discussing situations that occur with friends, but experiences with white strangers or acquaintances. Thus, the coping techniques are very different due to the support systems to discuss these types of experiences and the frequency of exposure in day-to-day life to racism. Counter-framing is in a way a coping technique; the main purpose of counter-frames for people of color is to help them better understand and resist their oppression (Feagin 2010, 19).

Overall, the ways in which these participants discuss racist and/or discriminatory experiences are windows into the many coping strategies people of color use on a daily basis from several different backgrounds and depend on the racialized space they are interacting within on a daily basis. Frames, like the home-culture and resistance framing of people of color, assist persons in making sense of racial situations and phenomena and cope with the situation by being able to understand that you are not alone in your struggle. However, just because persons of color do not use home-culture or resistance

framing to analyze their racist experiences does not mean they are not coping in their own ways. Recall that the danger of constant interpersonal racial attacks (such as racial jokes and name-calling) is that they add up on a daily basis and contribute to feelings of stress. Furthermore, it adds more stress for an individual to constantly decide when to resist an offense and when to let it slide. Perhaps coming up with reasons to let offenses slide is a way of surviving in the meantime. Whether or not any of these coping strategies are healthy is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Besides, it may be that students at the PWI may look back later on in life once they have graduated and reach a different place to understand their situation more in terms of home-culture frames once they leave the intensely racialized environment. Thus, the following sections look into the framing patterns of students based on institution.

“It Doesn’t Bother Me... They didn’t Mean it...”

The variety of coping techniques to diminish the level of offense or significance of a racist experience for some participants is a major finding. While some students at first claim an experience racist, they then attempt to explain why it actually is not that bad. The coping mechanisms include the following: (1) using phrases such as “it doesn’t bother me,” “I didn’t bother me.” “it only happened once,” to lessen the offense, and (2) avoiding calling out their friend’s racist behavior usually by trying to rationalize away the racist/discriminatory behavior/act. These “coping mechanisms” appear together and several times within any one of the examples below. Remember that students at PWI and HIS 40, who report spending most of their time with white friends, use these tactics almost exclusively. The following quote from Elisa, a PWI student responding to a

vignette about a Latino student feeling uncomfortable with friends that make racist jokes, is an example.

See I don't really sympathize with that cause I don't usually, I don't get offended about jokes about race cause, **they usually from the start know that I'm Mexican when they make the jokes.** *Who is they?* My friends. **They don't make racial jokes often but when they do they're fun.** So **I don't usually mind them,** and I don't. I mean, like, they are usually like stereotypes. *Like what kind of stereotypes or jokes?* Well they like to make fun of me cause I don't like tacos that much. And they say but you're supposed to love tacos! But **I don't take offense to it.** *Why do you not take offense to it?* Cause it's just food. Not everyone likes food just cause your race tells you too [in a goofy tone]. I don't know, **it just doesn't bother me...** I don't know I guess **I'm apathetic to those jokes at this point.** I guess **at one point I would have gotten offended, but now they just roll off, so I don't really get offended as much.** And some people don't like them, and some people just become apathetic. *So you think that happened to you, that you just heard them so often you just became apathetic?* I don't think so cause I mean sometimes I laugh at them cause they are entertaining and they can be funny, so I don't think I'm apathetic, I think I'm just ah, I don't know... **it just doesn't affect me,** I don't know why anymore [nervous laugh]. (Elisa, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Elisa uses several coping tactics to try to convince me (or herself) that while she experiences racist jokes from her friends (sometimes directed at her), she is not bothered by them. In a previous portion of the interview, Elisa explains that most of her current college friends are white and make jokes about her not liking tacos or guacamole because she is supposed to like them as a Mexican. Elisa even alludes to other types of jokes her friends make that use racial stereotypes in the quote above. Yet, Elisa continues to offer several statements to excuse her friends from this negative behavior, including: (1) her friends know that she is Mexican before the jokes start, (2) the jokes are not often, (3) the jokes are actually fun, and (4) food stereotyping is not a serious offense. Furthermore, Elisa repeatedly uses the phrases "it doesn't bother me" and "it doesn't offend me". Interestingly, Elisa does mention that at one time she would have

been offended, but for some reason unknown to her, she is no longer offended by so many jokes and instead finds them funny and entertaining or lets them “just roll off, so I don’t get offended as much.”

As many times as Elisa tries to claim that the jokes do not bother her, one would think that if they truly did not bother her, she would not have brought them up at this point in the interview. Furthermore, she goes back and forth between saying that the racist jokes of her friends do not bother her, but they did at one time, and now she just lets them go so they do not bother her. Elisa is utilizing a coping mechanism by repeating often that these jokes do not bother her and at the same time tries to make the incidents less offensive and excuse her friends’ behavior. Remember, verbal comments or jokes at the interpersonal level can seem insignificant in nature, but over time can become a source of stress and burden. When confronted with constant racial joking, even if it is “not really serious,” individuals (especially persons of color) have to decide if they are going to address the jokes by asking someone to stop or to continue to allow jokes. To ask someone to stop is a risk. There is not necessarily a risk of a physical altercation, but one that may have social implications, such as losing friends. It seems that, for whatever reason, Elisa is willing to listen to these jokes with her friends, but over time has had to rationalize to herself why these jokes do not bother her.

Another example of these coping techniques comes from another PWI student below. Sonia is another Latina who claims to have mostly white friends in college and describes more white friends during high school than students of color. I asked Sonia to

give me an example of something she has experienced that she would consider racist.

Her response is as follows:

Saying that someone gets into a university or a scholarship because they are a minority. *Do you have an example of that experience?* So **one of my Caucasian friends was getting kind of upset about scholarships**, like they are not super wealthy, but they are not poor either so they could not get scholarships for that. And **I had gotten a scholarship and she had asked me if I had gotten it because I was Hispanic**, and I was like no, **I had gotten it because I was top ten percent**. So I just remember that. *So are you saying that was racist?* Well... **no I don't think she meant it, but I guess according to my, well, I don't know. Maybe it was like borderline racism.** *Did it upset you?* Yeah! **I was really upset** because I had worked my butt off in high school, you know. I guess I could have gotten scholarships for being Hispanic, but that's not what I got it for. *So how did you exactly react to her?* I'm usually pretty calm when I get upset, weirdly, so I just told her no I got it because I was top ten percent yeah, like when you were at football games I would be at home studying. And she was like, oh, and **she looked at me and said I'm sorry, cause she realized that that was kind of wrong of her to just assume that.** (Sonia, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Sonia begins by clearly claiming that assuming someone gets into a university or gets a scholarship because of their minority status rather than merit is racist. However, after telling me her experience with one of her white friends who had acted on that same assumption, notice that Sonia cannot say that her friend acted in a racist manner. Sonia becomes confused in trying to make excuses for her white friend saying, "she didn't mean it" and that it was "borderline racism." Furthermore, when I press Sonia further for her feelings about the incident, she admits that the incident upset her, yet she still makes an excuse to avoid admitting that her white friend did something racist. In fact, Sonia claims that after she confronted this friend on her racist assumption, "she looked at me and said I'm sorry, cause she realized that was kind of wrong of her to just assume that."

It is uncertain whether Sonia is creating that realization for her friend or if in fact the friend realized this.

Here is another quote to illustrate this point from David, a student at the HSI40, who claims to have more white friends and roommates, and even states earlier in his interview the difficulty he had getting along with Latinos because he feels judged that he did not speak Spanish. Prior to this quote, David recounts having to deal with a white roommate who makes racist jokes, but also says things like, “fucking Mexicans why don’t they learn to speak English.” David admits that comments like this hurt him because he relates them back to his mother who is a first generation immigrant from Mexico who worked hard and struggled to learn the language for many years but never had time to formally study it. When I ask David if he has to deal with other racist incidents or jokes with his friends/roommates, David gives the following quote:

Like why would they [racial jokes] be offensive? Like for me most people just need to look at where that stereotype came from, like cool aid, like Black people like cool aid? It’s cheap and easy to make. Watermelon is a cheap fruit that can feed so many. Like Mexicans and rice and beans, and so you have to understand where those stereotypes are coming from and I think that if you have a better understanding of where they come from than it’s not as hurtful or rude or whatever. **So, like when I hear something new and it angers me, I try to think where did that come from? Where did that originate from and why did they say it? And if it’s true, if they view it as demining I view it differently.** From my understanding of it and how I view it and where it came from. **I say ‘oh it’s a stereotype and they don’t know any better’.** Like me saying, ‘oh Koreans are good at math’, that’s from me not knowing the population and just how stereotypes go, and for them if that person isn’t good at math, than I’d say sorry, **it’s just from where I come from. So when I hear stuff it doesn’t offend me, but when I hear new stuff I try to see where it comes from and understand where it comes from, and if you can do that, you have a better idea of the person said it and why they said it.** (David, 2nd Generation HSI40)

David's response is puzzling as he first tells me about how his white roommate says offensive things about Mexicans not knowing English and uses a home-culture frame to refer back to the struggles of first generation Mexicans like his mother. Then, he rationalizes why the other racist jokes his roommate makes are fine and not offensive. David continues to give common explanations from a colorblind frame of why individuals take part in racist behavior. One of these is that people who use racial stereotypes just "don't know better" because they are ignorant. Another similar phrase is, "it is just where someone comes from". The reason why these are part of the mainstream colorblind frame is that it attempts to write off racism as just a natural social phenomena that occurs due to regions or ignorance, and does not go further into any critical analysis. While David does not go into detail about racist jokes that his roommates/ friends tell, it is clear that he has found a way to explain this behavior in such a way that it seems logical and excuses the behavior by falling back on, "they just don't know better." David actually defends racist jokes and his friends/roommates at the same time. This is a perfect example of how some Latinos and Latinas are multi-framers.

Being multi-framers is the product of Latinos and Latinas having to function in two parallel worlds. Many Latinos come from backgrounds where they still practice some cultural traditions, and have family members, friends, and communities that support and create this world within the U.S. But, Latinos and Latinas at the same time have to be able to function in a white world, and for some it is being in predominantly white spaces that are not so supportive of their culture or the struggle of their communities. The students at PWI report more contact with whites than any of the other

two institutions, which is expected since PWI is 80 percent white. However, “contact” includes just going to sit next to white students in class or the cafeteria without really engaging in conversations for some participants. It was those participants that went further to say that they actually had mostly white friends that exhibited the coping strategies discussed in this section. The research on Latinos and Latinas experiences in predominantly white institutions reveals that they face isolation from not interacting or creating friendships with whites. It is the case in this dissertation that some Latinos and Latinas did try to keep friendships with whites. For example, in the case of David, he describes later in the interview feeling rejected all his life by Latinos due to his inability to speak Spanish and didn’t spend much time with Latinos. Alex at PWI also discusses why she chooses to have more white friends in the quote below.

It’s hard to hang out with Hispanics or Mexicans, because they do see me as something other because I don’t have a similar background as them. [But] even [though] I was made fun of in [predominantly white hometown] I grew around white people and I have an easier time identifying with them and I don’t feel as out of place with them. Even though I do understand that some of them are going to see me as other. Most of the ones that I have made a connection with do not see as other and see me as a part of their life in general. (Alex, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Alex explains that she spends most of her life around whites and white friends and has had uncomfortable confrontations with Latinas at PWI. She does not know Spanish and admits to having faced racist comments before in her past from whites. Yet she also explains that the best way to enhance one’s possibility of success and avoid further offenses is to do your best to act white. Thus, she not only has mostly white friends, but also has visibly changed her appearance to follow the fashion trends of the

white female students on that campus (hair, makeup, wardrobe). This illustrates the need to avoid lumping together the experiences of Latinos and Latinas in these institutions. The choices of these Latinos and Latinas to interact more with whites led them to very different behaviors as they navigate not only the racial relations but within a space that is white. For many reasons, these students made white friends and sought to maintain those relationships, which may require using the coping strategies to say “it doesn’t bother” and to rationalize ways to excuse their white friends’ racist behaviors. Alex and Elisa are not necessarily working from a colorblind frame, as they are able to identify the behavior or assumptions as racist, but they are only willing to go so far in being critical of the situation or their white friends.

Meanwhile, other Latinos at PWI report similar experiences as their counterparts in other predominantly white institutions, where they chose isolation as a shield between themselves and the perceived hostile environment (Chapter II). The following quotes are very common from Latinos and Latinas who report having only Latino friends and report not having experiences of racism or discrimination when interacting with other students at PWI.

Uh, I don’t think I’ve had that big of a problem... I guess I also hang out with a lot of Hispanics, so that’s never really been an issue. Like my roommate right now, he is my best friend and he is also Hispanic, and then my other roommate is Black, and I try to hang out with people that are less...I guess more easy going, more accepting of others. So you know the people I usually hang out with don’t care where I come from or make those types comments or jokes. (Carlos, 1st Generation, PWI)

I try to stay away from feeling unwelcomed. *How so?* By sticking with my friends like in the environment with them, hanging out with them, going to events where we won’t feel uncomfortable. *So do you think you use your friends to shield yourself from feeling unwelcomed?* I think so cause, um, I guess we

always just stick together and go to the same events... I'm always with my best friend so [laughs]. (Gabriela, 2nd Generation, PWI)

These students manage their lives with minimal contact with other white students. Similarly, they report sitting next to white students in class but would not engage in conversations or attempt to create friendships with them. Thus, these students at PWI did not partake in discussing racist incidents with their friends and therefore do not depend on the coping techniques to lessen the significance of racist situations, or rationalizing ways to excuse their friends' racist behaviors. These students, like the students at HSI80 and those with mostly Latino friends at HIS40, tend to explain and discuss their racist experiences using home-culture or resistance frames. These examples are covered in the section below.

Using Counter Frames to Discuss and Cope with Racist Experiences

As discussed above, it became apparent that Latino and Latina participants that report socializing with more friends of color (mostly Latinos) are more likely to use counter-framing such as home-culture and resistance framing when discussing their personal experiences with racism and discrimination. These quotes show that these Latinos and Latinas spent time elaborating and connecting their personal experience to several racial issues the U.S. is facing today. These students do this by using counter-framing to make those connections and offer critical commentary at times as well. Counter-framing for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin can come in many forms as discussed in Chapter II. Remember that the main purpose of counter-frames for people of color is to help them better understand and resist their oppression (Feagin 2010, 19) and can be considered a coping technique. The most critical of these sub frames for

Latinos of Mexican origin relates to the work and theories developed through the Chicano Movement from Chicano scholars, activists, and artists. Furthermore, Latinos, especially those of Mexican origin, work out of a strong home-culture frame which is like other resistance frames that draw on material from the cultural backgrounds of the oppressed (Feagin 2010b, 19). Mexican origin peoples have a history of dealing with oppression not just in the U.S. but are also considered a colonized a people. Home-culture framing acknowledges this.

Thus, while many students do not use strong theoretical arguments or reference academic Chicano or Chicana writings or speeches of resistance, most use home-culture framing narratives. Home-culture framing emphasizes the importance of maintaining pride in Mexican culture and traditions, including the Spanish language, maintaining strong communities, and resisting the white racial frame that seeks to break elements of traditional Mexican culture (Feagin and Cobas 2014, 45). Largely, counter-framing at its best is about being critical of white Americans and having an anti-oppression understanding to promote some level of resistance (Feagin and Cobas 2014, 44-45). For example, the following quote from Angelica, at PWI, represents a quote from the home-culture frame at this institution. She shares an account of dealing with immigration as a topic of conversation with two white classmates and a white instructor in a classroom setting.

In one of the classes we had to do research and like the research we were working on was building a theory and then surveying people, and it was about the... the... bill, the Dream Act. And like there was a point where I was working with two whites, and I was the only Hispanic, and we were chosen to work on that topic, and some of the things they were saying I was like thinking “no, it’s not like that”. Like the reasons behind it [the Dream Act], I can’t remember, but

like they were targeting more like Mexicans. And I said but immigrants aren't just Mexicans, and even what the teacher was saying was focusing on Mexicans... then I thought maybe I was wrong [that is was about Mexican immigrants only]. And then it got to a point where I felt like I had to clarify [to my group], that I was from here [the U.S.], that I wasn't an immigrant. They were like, "oh no," they said they felt they had said something wrong, and that they hadn't tried to assume or anything. But I felt like they were, like they were walking on egg shells talking to me about immigration... I just worked with it, but they really just see this [immigration Dream Act] as Mexicans and I was thinking immigrants are from everywhere, not just Mexico. (Angelica, 2nd Generation, PWI)

In this experience, there are a couple of offenses in Angelica's eyes. For one, she is critical of her group mates and the instructor for treating the Dream Act and immigration overall as an exclusively Mexican phenomena. She resists by trying to explain this is not so, but the instructor comes in and continues to refer to Mexican immigrants exclusively. Then, the bigger situation is that this entire time, Angelica's white group mates are acting or talking to her in such a way that makes her realize they assume she is an immigrant even though she is a second generation Latina. Angelica resists again by confronting them about their assumption. The white group mates deny this assumption. However, unlike other scenarios in the section above, Angelica does not try to rationalize her white group mates' behavior or assumptions, nor does she try to say that the incident did not bother her. Rather, Angelica elaborates on the experience with me and shows that she is capable of being critical of whites and is aware of their racist assumptions toward immigrants and Mexicans. In addition, Angelica practices resistance by addressing the "elephant in the room," her group mates assumption that she is an immigrant because she is Mexican.

Another example comes from HSI80, where once again, the majority of the students use counter-framing despite their colorblind definitions of racism. The following excerpts come from a very lengthy discussion about racism I had with Cristina . Like other students at HSI80, she tells me that she cannot think of a racist situation she had to face on campus or in the classroom, but she can tell me about ones off campus. She begins to tell me about a party she attended with her Mexican friend and her friend's husband, who is a white military man known to be very patriotic but also very racist against Mexicans. At this party, where he was the only white man, he stood up and yelled, "You fuckin Mexicans are so ungrateful so what the fuck are you doing here?" after overhearing the Mexican friends talk about missing various cultural practices and traditions from Mexico. Cristina then continues to tell me of another incident dealing with this white husband.

The another day, he started showing a video that was talking bad about Mexicans about how we are ungrateful, how we come here to get all the jobs, and that we steal form people! And he's been talking smack about Mexicans this whole time. And I know we don't come for, "give me, give me, give me" [handouts]. Cause what are we going to steal from you? The jobs nobody wants? The janitor job? The farm work? I mean the government is struggling to find people to work in the fields, and who is out there? Immigrants, some of them Mexican... And I know from studies that I've learned here in my classes that Hispanics here are really involved in a lot of markets. Like if you see commercials of Jack in the Box, English and Spanish, and cosmetics, English and Spanish, and we, Hispanics and Latinos, are the population that brings more in groceries, toys, and clothing, and you are telling me that I'm here to fucking steal? No, no, I came here to work, and invest. I mean, the US is a really good country it has given me so much opportunity, but would it really be the same if there were no Mexicans here? I know a lot of people, not necessarily just white people, but other people too that think that Mexicans, or people that just speak Spanish, that we came here just to displace you, but I mean have you seen in movies or heard stories that say just be a *Hispano* or be Latino and you will be rich? Have you heard that? (Cristina , 1st Generation, HSI80)

Cristina is very passionate as she speaks about these issues. and it is evident she has not only studied these issues prior to our interview but has thought critically about them before as well. Cristina is very much aware of the struggles of Mexican and other Latino peoples in the U.S., but she is also aware of their power and economic strength. Her awareness shows her ability to use home-culture framing. Furthermore, this entire passage demonstrates the critiques and thoughts about resistance that she uses. However, when I ask her if she had ever brought up any of these valid arguments to her friend's white husband she responds the following.

No, I mean I can't [disappointed tone]. I don't tell him anything cause he is the husband of my best friend, so I mean if I say something, and they make up, then I'll be the bitch that said something. So I mean it's not really that I don't want to defend my culture, but I have respect for my friend. But if it were another dude, that bitch would be in the ground already [laughs]. (Cristina , 1st Generation, HSI80)

Cristina is clearly very passionate and well versed in home-culture arguments and in her resistance, but she also has some allegiance to her Mexican girl friend and does not want to risk losing that friendship by saying something to the husband. Not all Latino and Latina participants in this study who discuss experiencing racism or discrimination actually resist against it in a verbal or physical way in the moment. There are many risks which may not always be physical, but verbal assaults or the risks of losing friendships with white or other people of color are also risks. This analysis focuses on the ways the participants rationalized the entire interaction after the fact. Thus, even though Cristina does not physically resist against her friend's racist husband, she is explaining and admitting her anger toward the situation using counter framing.

Likewise, below is another account from HSI40, where Jose tells us about an incident that occurred with his friends, who are actually Latino. Jose recognizes that his friends used a racist term in discussing immigration that greatly upset him.

Most recent one, I went out to the lake with my friends, and by friends I mean I wasn't the only first generation Mexican, and we got into a conversation about my parents working in agriculture, and just by that conversation I guess it was seen that they thought I was insinuating that I am not a citizen from here. And so they said, "so you're an alien," and you know that's a weird word to use. It's stupid! First of all they are not saying you are not from this country, they are saying that you are not from this world. So that, even though they might not think of it like that, because they are not thinking of the definition, the truth is if you are using that word [illegal alien], that you are telling someone you are not of this world, you shouldn't exist in this world, you shouldn't be in this world. It's like that's not the right word to be using. Undocumented [the right word] Jose, 2nd Generation, HSI40)

Jose uses counter-framing to explain why the word "alien" is offensive and is very critical in his interpretation that it really is signifying that Mexican immigrants do not belong and "should not exist in this world." Note this is the first example where the perpetrator is not white. Yet, notice that Jose does not try to assert that the incident had no effect on him, nor does he try to rationalize a way to excuse his friend for using this racist word directed at him like many of the other participants did when talking about their white friends. He is practicing critical thinking and working out of a counter-frame that is resisting using terms that strip Mexican immigrants of their humanity, as many other Latino and Latina scholars and activists have resisted against using "alien" or even "illegal" for the term undocumented.

Finally, the last example comes from Daniel at HSI80 who also has a very lengthy discussion with me about his several confrontations with white border patrol

agents. For example, he talks about one day walking to his home on the U.S. side miles from the border in the middle of downtown. A white border patrol agent sees him, pulls over, and demands to see his papers, treating him very rudely. Daniel admits he knows that this agent is profiling him, but that he takes great pleasure in the fact that he had all his papers in order so the agent could do nothing to him because he was legally here.

Daniel goes on to discuss other experiences.

Other times, when I cross the border, I go to visit my family in [Mexico side]. The customs, just because they see me brown, and my last name [says Spanish sounding last name] they act different with you... They usually ask you, "what's your name," and "what are you doing in [Mexico side]." But sometimes they ah, I have been asked the usual, but then also, "what are you brining?" Or, "remove your coat, pull up your jeans so I make sure you're not hiding something in them." [I've been asked also] to open my bag even though they screen it in the x ray machine, and you know they are doing this cause they saw you brown and they think that you are suspicious of whatever.... I have been screened that hard by white men, but it's also that when there is another Latinos. And you feel weird, cause it's like, hey man, we are both Latinos, we are both *paisanos*. Why are you being so hard on me? It should be the other way around. Like they see that you are also [Spanish last name] [waves hand in welcome gesture to provide example and says in compassionate tone] "come on brother." (Daniel, 1st Generation, HSI80)

Daniel is critical of the ways the white agents racially profile him and harass him, both on and off the bridge. Daniel is medium skin toned with black hair and an audible accent, which make him more susceptible to racial profiling compared with fair-skinned Latinos who do not speak with accents. Daniel also expresses how it upsets him that the Latino agents act the same way toward him as the white agents. Daniel believes that there should instead be recognition of their brotherhood. The term Daniel specifically uses is "paisanos," which translates to friend, fellow countryman, and even slang for buddy or pal. Part of counter-framing is the instilling of pride in your background and

the necessity to maintain community among your group of origin, for example Mexicans, in order to stand together against oppression. Of course, history and contemporary studies are filled with numerous examples where those of Mexican origin have not maintained community. For example, consider the divides that can occur across citizenship lines or even generational statuses within the Latino Mexican origin community documented in previous studies (Guitierrez 1995; Jimenez 2010; Ochoa 2004; Sanchez 1993). Yet overall, counter-framings such as that from the Chicano Movement attempt to instill the need to build and maintain comradery among Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. The home-culture frame that understands the history of oppression and common struggles of Mexican origin peoples is where this expectation and disappointment Daniel feels is coming from when he is harassed the same way by white and Latino agents.

In summary, the quotes above illustrate the many ways that Latino and Latina participants primarily from HSI80 were able to work out of a counter-frame to explain and discuss racist experiences but also to be critical of their fellow Latinos influenced by the white racial frame. As mentioned above, the similarities with Latinos and Latinas who were able to work from the counter-frame was the fact that they came from Latino dominate institutions or reported having predominantly Latino friends in college and/or before college. These Latinos and Latinas are exposed more often to counter-frames, especially the home-culture frame that instills pride in a Mexica culture and solidarity in shared struggles. The home-culture keeps Latinos aware of the shared struggles of their friends and family dealing with systems of oppression in the U.S. across many years to

create a narrative to which they can refer to understand racial relations in the U.S. Furthermore, maintaining mostly Latino friendships into adult life also allows Latinos and Latinas to practice thinking and discussing from counter-frames and, therefore, be better able to critically think and relate their experience to the larger narrative of the struggles of being Mexican in the U.S. Thinking out of counter-frames can be a strong coping strategy for many Latinos and Latinas who can find support with other Latinos who are also facing the same day-to-day struggles.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter looks at the framing Latinos and Latinas use to talk about racism and racial discrimination, conceptually and applicably to their own experiences. Past research finds that Latinos and Latinas are multi-framers, and this dissertation study finds similar results. The majority of Latinos and Latinas in this dissertation study did use colorblind and mainstream framing to define racism and racial discrimination conceptually, regardless of how they later changed frames to explain their experiences. This demonstrates the pervasiveness of mainstream colorblind ideologies in the U.S. that many of these participants grew up hearing as millennials in a country wanting to claim a post racial status. The most dangerous part of colorblind and mainstream interpretations is how they warp the way racism and discrimination actually work in the U.S., both currently and in the past. For example, recall the misguided attempts of many participants to explain when a racist joke was not racist. Yet, some Latino and Latina students did show their ability to think outside of colorblind and mainstream interpretations of racism, especially when it was applied to their lived experiences.

Furthermore, the amount or the extent of contact with whites played a role in how far a student was willing to go towards a counter-frame interpretation of his or her experience. The students at PWI and HSI40, who reported having predominantly white friends, all exhibited the same behavior where they would be able to identify something their white friend did or said that was racist, but then were only able to go so far in being critical of the situation. For many this meant trying to take back their statements or rationalize why the offense was actually not that bad, and some would go further and try to rationalize ways to prevent being critical of their friend to the point of offering colorblind explanations such as, “they just don’t know better.” Having to think in a less critical frame may be a kind of coping or survival strategy for those Latinos and Latinas constantly interacting with whites who work from the white racial frame, even the most well intentioned whites are well versed in colorblind ideologies. Perhaps it is easier for these Latinos and Latinas to keep saying “it doesn’t bother me” and to move on than to work out of a counter-frame that most likely would make their white friends uncomfortable and risk losing that friendship. Additionally, especially for those who reported having mostly white friends in high school and in college, they may not have been as well versed in counter-framing due to their lack of exposure or practice with using it or applying it to their experiences.

Furthermore, for other Latinos and Latinas at PWI, their coping strategy was to isolate themselves with only Latino friends and have as minimal contact as possible with whites on campus. Latinos and Latinas who report having predominantly Latino friends in high school and especially in college at all institutions (PWI, HSI40, and mostly

HSI80) show they are versed with various aspects of counter-framing regardless of whether they took the risk in the moment to resist against an offense. Unlike the students with white friends, these Latinos and Latinas were willing to be critical of whites and even other Latinos who were working out of the white racial frame.

Thus, it is true that Latinos and Latinas are aware of all different kinds of frames and are at various levels of criticalness. How far someone is going use a critical counter-frame may depend on his/her chosen coping strategy to deal with day-to-day racism and discrimination. This can be impacted by the racial composition and overall racialized space of the institution, since predominantly white spaces appeared to have more racist situations for these students. There should be further research into the friendship networks and framing of Latino and Latina college students of Mexican origin at different institutions. After all, at this age they are influenced by their friends that may take the role of family, especially for those that are attending a college away from home. And there are different consequences for working out of various frames depending on the racialized space overall and especially depending on who you are depending on as your support group of friends to help navigate that space. In this case, a student's background heavily influenced how he/she interpreted and navigated racist situations.

CHAPTER VI

CAMPUS RACIALIZED SPACE IMPACTS ON RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY

Introduction

Another guiding question for this dissertation asks if Latino and Latinas of Mexican origin face similar or different racialized experiences depending on the racial composition of their institution. Furthermore, a secondary question asks how they navigate this space, and finally, how they feel the space affects their racial/ethnic identity. Recall the literature's lack of clarity about Hispanic Serving Institutions. One set of studies show that Hispanic Serving Institutions are very similar to predominantly white institutions in that Latino and Latinas students there continue to face racism under an institutional structure that is still predominantly white. However, a second set of studies point to how Latinos and Latinas feel less marginalized at a Hispanic Serving Institution because the space allows for more outlets and support for Latino culture. It is never clear how or what types of experiences with racism or discrimination occurs at Hispanic Serving Institutions. It is important to know about racist or discrimination experiences since negative feelings about perceived hostile environments lead Latinos feel like they do not belong in college, affects their academic performance, if they finish college, and how they develop their racial/ethnic identity. This chapter will address all these issues.

This chapter relates to the previous chapter, Chapter V Latinos and Latinas Talking about Racism. As mentioned in Chapter V, explicitly talking about experiences

of racism and discrimination is very difficult for the majority of the participants. Out of the entire sample, only about one-third across all institutions are willing to be very open and offer critiques and criticism of their negative experiences on campus. The rest of the two thirds are more reluctant in talking about these issues and at first give very general, ambiguous comments about what it is like to be a student at their university.

Additionally, in Chapter V, there are examples of students who tell me about a racist or discriminatory experience and then try to say it does not matter or that it really does not bother them. In situations like these, it can be a challenge to interpret these experiences as a whole within each institution since Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin are not homogenous and neither their experiences.

Thus, the interpretation of the overall experience of being student at each institution really depends on the interviewee and their personal background. For example, in the previous chapter, it is evident that students with more white friendships not only have different experiences dealing with racism on a daily basis, but also talk about those experiences differently than those Latinos and Latinas with mostly Latino friends. Additionally, at all the institutions, a participants generational status also plays a major role in their experiences, and impacts even how they interact with other Latinos and Latinas.

Therefore, this chapter takes much careful analysis to not only keep track of the types of experiences that the students are facing, but furthermore go beyond what participants are saying sometimes does not matter or is not a problem. For example, sometimes I needed to consider if one student told me there is no racism and that

everything is very friendly at their institution, but then another student at the same institution tells me about one or three major offenses. It is a challenge to analyze the data when there are so many students from various backgrounds and perspectives. The overall analysis in this chapter is the general condition of Latinos and Latinas on their campuses, but still takes into account important differences depending on a student's personal background.

This chapter has two major sections. The first section covers the differences and similarities that Latino and Latina participants face at the three institutions differing in racial composition and racial climate. Evidence suggests that there are differences in the types, contexts, and quantity of experiences with racism and discrimination at the three different institutions that are attributed to racialized space. The focus is more on interpersonal level forms of racism and then some structural. The students tended to focus and report more on interpersonal levels of discrimination even in their own experiences, and it took further questioning them specifically on institutional racism to get their opinions on these topics. This also does not mean that there are not structural racisms happening, but we will be able to notice structural forms of racism overall through their discussion of interpersonal racist experiences.

The second section illustrates how the students themselves feel that the campus or university's racialized space is affecting their racial/ethnic identity. Remember that students are allowed to identify however they wish. As covered in Chapter IV Identity Management, context greatly affects which labels Latinos and Latinas use. Thus, this section does not concern itself with exactly how the students identified, and if they

changed the label or not during college, but rather their own explanation or interpretation of how they feel the university is either helping them grow and express their identity, or is hindering their ability to grow and express the identity. Some choose to talk about how they had gained a stronger or weaker connection to their racial/ethnic identity during their time in college. Some feel they have to hide it more at school compared to home. There are many ways that students talk about how the racialized space impacted their racial/ethnic identity and it once again depends greatly on their background (such as generational status, ability to speak Spanish, and if they are more comfortable with more white or Latino friends).

Furthermore, special note is taken on the location of the incidents and coded appropriately to note whether an incident occurred out of town, in town, or directly on the campus. If an incident occurred on the campus, it is further coded to specify if it is on the general campus areas such as library, recreation areas, or cafeterias, in a classroom, or in a dorm. Further questions and notes are taken to gather the racial background of those involved in almost every incident, how the student feel, and what their reactions are to the incident at the time. We will begin looking at HSI80, then PWI, and finally HSI40.

Experiences of Racism Reported at HSI80

Recall that student enrollment at HSI80 is about 80 percent Latino and 9 percent white. Furthermore, Table 2 in Chapter III (pg. 40) shows that HSI80 has the most Latino instructors (34 percent) at all levels even though these numbers by no means are comparable to the student population. Furthermore, Figure 3 (pg.42) also shows that

HSI80 has had a booming Latino population steadily growing and outnumbering whites for the past 20 years. Thus, HSI80 is an example of not only a Hispanic Serving Institution, but one where the majority of the student body has been Latino for almost 20 years. Walking on HSI80's campus you notice the majority of brown faces, and regularly hear Spanish and English as you pass by individuals' private conversations in every part of the campus. The overall, architecture of campus is rather unique in that it is Asiatic in theme from the shape and design of the buildings to the details of benches or gardens. The student sample at this institutions included far more first and second generation Latinos than at the other two institutions, and the majority of them reported being able to speak Spanish very well (Table 3 pg47).

Even though I ask the same questions and in the same order in all the interviews across all the institutions, HSI80 participants have the most difficult time focusing on experiences of racism or discrimination they experience on campus. Many open up and say, "not here on campus, but off camps, or out of town yes." I specifically bring up examples of dealing with racist assumptions or derogatory comments that other studies show Latino and Latina students experience in classrooms or dealing with teachers, students, or staff. HSI80 participants would deny ever having similar experience like that on campus or in a classroom. Rather, these students chose to tell me about dealing with racial profiling For example as we read about Daniel on and off the border, about dealing with racist comments and slurs as Christina had told us also dealing with her friends white husband.

There are also examples like the two quotes below about the racist incidents that occur out of town at conferences or sports games where students are representing the institution. The first quote is from Martina who is at an internship in Alaska with other students from HSI80 and others from all across the U.S. Her incident occurs playing a board game, Cards Against Humanity, with some students from HSI80, and white students from other institutions.

There was this card that said, “if you could eliminate something from this country what would it be... blank.” Everyone has to play a card [write something down on the card], and this [white] girl puts out her card and she starts laughing saying, “I’m going to win, I’m going to win.” I was the only Mexican, like even though there are other people from [HSI80] I was the only one born and raised in Mexico. When we turned the cards over, hers said, “Hard working ass Mexicans,” and something like them being here stealing our jobs. Everyone was like “huh!” and looked at me. No one laughed except her. I felt hurt of course, but I knew that we had been drinking and stuff, and so it was like, ok, I’m not going to take it seriously, and I wasn’t sure if she knew that I wasn’t American, but the rest knew. Then she looked at me and realized it I think. I pretended, well I actually was upset, but I joked around like I was very, very upset and I was like, at the end I laughed and tried to make it look like a joke like *jaja* that’s funny. (Martina, 1st Generation, HIS 80)

We went for a volley ball game [out of town] and... it felt like they wouldn't sit us down at a restaurants because our team was predominantly Mexican American. Um, they would call us like... ah... what it is called... oh, *mojados*, but they would say it "MO -J-Dos" [laughs]. *Who is they?* The white people around there. Like at the volley ball tournament the moms would look at us ugly and some yelled, “Go back to your country!” (Estela, 2nd Generation, HSI80)

These quotes show how students at HSI80 are aware of the types of racist stereotypes and anti-Latino sub-frame within the white racial frame. However, because HSI80 is located in a region that is predominantly Latino, these students do not encounter racist incidents from whites on campus as part of their day-to-day as often as those from PWI or HSI40. HSI80 participants though are very aware that racism and

discrimination continues in the U.S. because of these experiences out of town. Thus, they often refer to their home city and HSI80 as existing in a “bubble” that is a safe place from the outside world. The participants are also very much aware that people of Mexican origin are the majority in the city and at HSI80 which is different than other places in the U.S. Thus, further referring to “the bubble” as a place where they feel comfortable and like family to be able to practice their culture because no outsider is going to tell them to stop. Even though this dissertation study is interested in experiences of racism and discrimination on campus, because the participants at HSI80 claim they cannot provide examples from campus, I recorded off campus instances to analyze what they identify as racism.

Yet, things are not as perfect as they seem in HSI80 in regards to being a complete haven from racism. Note that in Martina’s quote above she makes this distinction, “I was the only Mexican, like even though there are other people from HSI80, I was the only one born and raised in Mexico.” This means that she is not the only individual of Mexican origin. Recall from Chapter IV that “Mexican” is understood by both those born in Mexico and those born in the U.S. to represent only those born in Mexico. Even though participants from HSI80 would deny being able to provide examples of racism in the classroom or on campus, there is a hyper awareness among them to distinguish between being a Mexican immigrants or American born. This hyper awareness sometimes is accompanied by racist assumptions about Mexican immigrants internalized from the white racial frame. Thus, underlying conflict is exposed when students began describing the atmosphere and the culture of their institution. Thus, even

without a white majority present, there are many Latinos and Latinas who had internalized racist assumptions from the white racial frame against Mexican immigrants and used it to distance themselves from Mexican culture and/or immigrants.

For example, Ruben's following quote illustrates the skepticism between some Mexican born towards the U.S. born. Ruben is born and raised in Mexico and describes the culture of the university to me in this way:

I think [HSI80] reflects the [city] in a way. I see a lot of Mexican Americans, but you see people from all over the places of town. When I first got here I used to see people from the east side, and before that I never interacted with those persons, I never interacted with that kind. They are rich, you know, and at first I saw them they all looked the same, with their hats and their pants. Like they wear snap backs, the big ass hats, when I was here. Some people from the west side and central, and it seemed from the east side there was more, and they are more Mexican American, I notice that they speak more English than Spanish. So they are more second or third generation, you know. Sure they have the last name, and the color or skin, but if you talk to them in Spanish, they'll just talk to you in English. (Ruben, 1st Generation, HSI80)

Ruben, like other first generation participants is critical of later generation Latinos because they are "too American," even though they have Spanish last names and look brown, they cannot speak Spanish. Spanish is a very important marker of identity as we have seen in previous chapter and in other research focusing on issues between the Mexican born and the U.S. born (Ochoa 2004). Many second and third generation Latinos feel guilty that they could not speak Spanish, or that their Spanish is not as polished as those born in Mexico. Participants claimed their guilt came from prior experiences being judged by the Mexican born as not really being Mexican. To further illustrate consider Angie's quote below where she explains to me that she sometimes doesn't feel Mexican enough because although she understands Spanish perfectly,

sometimes her words are pronounced “funny” which means she is more comfortable speaking in English. She further describes what it is like being on campus where language is an important part interactions and identity.

I was part of a peer leader-mentoring program for undergraduate assistants, like help students be introduced into college life. Every Friday we would have meetings and you could hear everyone *hablando* in *español* [speaking in Spanish]. And you would just see the clicks and their groups of friends that you’d feel like they are good enough [to be together], [but I’d be like], what am I going to do? Not that they wouldn’t talk to me if I talked to them, but I don’t know. I guess it’s more like you know they’re friends already and you are the stranger, and so you’re kind of like just there, but if they speak Spanish more I feel like they would judge my Spanish and I know that it’ doesn’t sound to their Spanish. *Do you feel that if they are judging your Spanish, then they are judging your “Mexican-ess”?* Yeah. Say that yeah you are not Mexican enough. I think that it really connects with that. And so I have family in [Mexico side] I feel like they really judge the way that me and my brother talks. We understand and speak it, but I feel like they are judging because we are like missing some words, or like how do you say, “defective”, in Spanish is *defectosos* [defective], or I’ll say *defectivo* [incorrect word for defective] and so they understand, but they are nice and they don’t correct me *pero me entiendien* [but they understand me]. (Angie, 2nd generation, HSI80)

Even though Angie speaks to me in Spanglish and clearly has knowledge of the language, she is still embarrassed as a second generation when speaking in Spanish to Mexicans from Mexico (even her own family). The criticalness of first generation Latinos like Ruben, and the feelings of embarrassment and inadequacy of the second or third generation like Angie are nothing new. In fact these types of narratives have been heard across many generations in many different studies (Jimenez 2010; Ochoa 2004; Sanchez 1993; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Vasquez 2011). However, the contention that Mexican immigrants have about the U.S. born as too “Americanized” is only half of the story. There are second and third generation Latinos that do feel connected to their

Mexican origin past and seek ways to reconnect to make up for the feelings of embarrassment, which we will see later in this chapter, but have also been documented in other studies (Jimenez 2010; Ochoa 2004; Vasquez 2011).

However, Angie's quote about feelings of inadequacy similar to other second and third generation participants, and then the feelings of distaste from other first generation participants like Ruben contribute to a campus that at times is segregated as Angie talks about the development of several groups or cliques in her mentoring meetings.

Additionally, adding even more conflict is when Latinos adopted racist stereotypes from the white racial frame and applied them to Mexican immigrants. Sara's quote below is a perfect example of internalized racism and how it creates conflict and divisions among the Mexican community. Sara is a third plus generation Latina who explains the types of stereotypes that the American born have about Mexican immigrants attending HSI80.

There are many ways that people identifying when they are of Hispanic origin. And for a lot of people that I know, including myself, a long time ago, well not that long ago, a year or two ago, I would not even called myself that [Mexican] because people would always say, "oh well you're Mexican, you're a wetback," and I'd be like no I am not. I am Hispanic and I was born here. It was a defense mechanism so that I started disliking it [Mexican] myself and say, "no, no I'm not Mexican. I wasn't born there I was born here." Also people would refer to Mexican people always like, "oh they're dumb, they're stupid, they're lazy," and things like that. Or I even had people at a job referring to Mexican people as wetbacks and I was like, "Ugh I don't want to be Mexican, there's so much bad to this." For the longest time I was like whatever I don't want to be a part of it at all, and it made me, not hate because that's a strong word, but be anti-everything Mexican, and I realized eventually that that's not good, it's not good to be that way because I'm Mexican. I am, and I want to know more about being that.

How would you be anti Mexican? I guess I would get angry like it got to the point that at work if people tried to speak Spanish to me I would go home and be angry like, "god they tried to speak Spanish to me it's so frustrating." It's sad cause I also have a lot of family that [did and] does the same thing... and say,

“they [Mexicans] are this and they are that, and we are Americans, not Mexicans.” And now, I’m like, but we are [Mexican]. As much as you want to deny it. Yet, they are still prejudice against Mexican people, like saying like, they should all go back and stay in Mexico. I don’t want to be like that anymore. (Sara, 3+ Generation, HSI80)

I ask Sara to clarify who exactly she is referring to when she says “they” and “people” and she clarified that they are “Mexican Americans”. Sara’s quote shows how some Mexican born individuals can internalize the racist stereotypes of the white racial frame about Mexicans being, “lazy, stupid, dumb” to the point where someone would want to deny they are even Mexican. Sara explains later that up to two years ago she actually participated in making racist jokes with other Mexican born individuals to try to establish that “anti-Mexican” identity and distance herself as much as she could from anything Mexican. Sara internalized the anti-Mexican messages and images and attempted to distance herself not just from immigrants, but from “Mexican-ness” period. This proved difficult since her appearance hinted that she “looked Mexican” enough that even her customers at her work would try to speak to her Spanish.

This next quote from Alejandra also shows some of the stereotypes that U.S. Mexican students at HSI80 had about Mexican immigrant students.

I feel like that [stereotyping] happens a lot here. *What makes you say that it happened a lot here?* Um, well cause we have a large Hispanic population. [5 second silence] And I think people have different identities and different stereotypes, like someone who is Mexican-Mexican [“really Mexican”] verses someone whose grandparents are Mexican. They have different stereotypes and views. But I know a lot of people who are proud of their origin, but I do know people also who are like, um, their parents are from Mexico and they would rather say they are Indian or American than Mexican. Or Mexican American. And I think a lot of it has to do with school and media and the stereotypes with Mexicans. *Can you elaborate on what are some of the ways U.S. born Mexicans*

think about the Mexicans? Yeah, like people are like, “oh the *fronchis*² they are from [Mexico side] and all they want to do is speak Spanish and have everyone speak Spanish and they don’t want to learn English. They have that attitude, but, some people don’t even know a lot of English in class, and you can hear people say things like, “oh if they are here they should know English”. And people have critiqued them [*fronchis*] for caring more about what they wear rather than what they study. (Alejandra, 3+ Generation, HSI80)

Recall that participants at HSI80 deny experiencing racism or discrimination on campus or in the classroom. Yet, clearly there are several examples above where participants allude to some of the internalized racism used against other Latinos, especially Mexican immigrants. In Angie’s quote she talks about groups separating at meetings, and in Alejandra’s quote above, she talks about how some students at HSI80 ridicule other students in class for speaking in class and not knowing English. Furthermore, the comment about how the Mexican immigrants care more about what they wearing, is also a perception about how little they cared about their education or studying. Therefore, while Latino and Latina participants at HSI80 report not experiencing racism or discrimination on campus, but out of town, this can true to the extent that whites are not the perpetrators on campus. Nevertheless, it is clear that Latinos and Latinas at HSI80 do continue to face racist assumptions and stereotypes from the white racial frame that had been internalized by other Latinos. Thus, producing in some cases segregation and conflict among the Mexican born and U.S. born. Part of having people of color internalize the white racial frame and apply it to other people or groups of color is about dividing and conquering.

² “Fronchi” is sometimes used as a derogatory way to refer to Mexican immigrants (especially if they are perceived to be wealthy). It is also slang as it is a shortened way of saying from the *frontera* “frontier.”

Experiences of Racism Reported at PWI

Experiences from participants at HSI80 are now be contrasted with those from participants at PWI. Recall that PWI is almost the opposite when it comes to racial demographics. The white student population at PWI is 67 percent white and the Latino population is 20 percent. PWI has been a historically white university since its founding, and continues to maintain predominantly white faculty as well. Table 2 (pg.40) shows that percentage of white faculty is 73 percent compared to 6 percent of Latino faculty at all ranks. The white space on this campus is evident not just from the majority of white bodies present, but also in the traditions, organizations, and activities that the university promotes according to several of the participants in this dissertation study. In fact, all participants from PWI recognize that PWI is very white campus environment and culture. The sample from this institution (Table 3, pg 47) is very second and third generation heavy, with only one first generation participant. Furthermore, the majority of the sample also spoke Spanish well, followed those that do not speak Spanish well. Only one person reported not speaking Spanish at all.

One finding specific to PWI is the social norms that are part of campus culture promoting segregation among students from different racial groups. Carina explains this saying, “I feel like [PWI] is very... like, I don’t know. I really like the campus, but it’s like a “them” and “us” type of thing. I don’t know how to explain it because people are not rude or hostile to me, but there is that sense of otherness.” This sense of otherness is expressed in various ways as many students commented on the visible segregation

between the races on campus. For example, Sonia below also speaks about de-facto segregation.

I guess I see, predominantly Hispanics hanging out together, predominantly Caucasians, and predominantly African Americans hanging out, so I don't know. I guess, they could be like, not verbally saying they are not going to hang out with someone because they are not the same race as them, but it shows. *Where do you see this?* Like walking around campus or at any major establishment. (Sonia, 3+Generation, PWI)

The de-facto segregation among the students at PWI is isolating for some participants as Carina points out it creates a, “us vs them” mentality. Much of the experiences that Latino and Latina participants expressed at PWI are similar to findings in the literature that highlight how Latinos and people of color at predominantly white institutions often feel marginalized. At PWI though, feeling marginalized results from social norms promoting segregation and the invisibility of Latino students in a predominantly white space. Furthermore, as covered in other chapters, we have already seen examples where students faced racist assumptions about being immigrants because of their Mexican background, that they are admitted into because of their race and not their merit, but now we can add also the feelings of “not belong”. Slurs, racist jokes, and comments are very obvious ways of letting Latino and Latina students know that they do not belong and are not welcome as it creates an uncomfortable environment. Even for those participants that claimed earlier that racist jokes or comments do not bother them, they still have to listen to them and make a conscious decision every day to ignore them.

Thus, while it is incorrect to say that at PWI Latino and Latina participants face obvious and explicit racist slurs and comments every day. It is evident that there are plenty of examples of more subtle forms of racism. “Subtle” means that not all racist

insults are explicit or even directly made at the participants. “Subtle” alludes to experiences where participants are ignored or not even noticed in a space, treated as invisible by not being greeted by other students on campus, have people avoid sitting next to them in class, or listen to fellow student’s racist comments in class. Subtle forms of racism are still racist especially when done in a racialized space that forces the racial minority to feel uncomfortable and powerless. Such subtle forms of racism can have lasting effects similar to explicit forms of racism. For example, below is a narrative from Gabriela that explains how interactions went for her at PWI because she expressed curiosity when I asked her if about her friends, and why it is that she thinks she does not have any white friends.

I just hang out with Hispanics, and I really don’t have any white friends. And like my friends too, they just hang out with Hispanics. *How does that work out if the majority of the students on campus are all white?* Well I know that when I came here it is mostly white, and I knew there would be some friends here, but I guess there really isn’t any issues involved so I guess it’s ok. [I have] [h]ardly any [interaction with whites]. But I mean if I have a friend there in class I will sit with them, I mean I do try to make friends with students, but sometimes I just go in there and sit down and pay attention to the professor. *Why do you think you haven’t made many white friends?* Like I mentioned before, I think it’s just that I feel like I don’t have the much things in common, sometimes I don’t even know what they are talking about, the music and the tv shows, and things they do as well. I feel like I don’t have that much connection. Sometimes I would have a friends, like last year I met, she’s white, but the only thing we would talk about it class work, and what you did on the weekends but we never really talked about anything that we had in common, it was just class work. *You said last year so did the friendship not last?* No, I haven’t talked to her since last year, so no. (Gabriela, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Gabriela’s quote is an example of how de-facto segregation is a social norm for “race relations” at PWI, which contributes to Latino invisibility on campus. There are Latino and Latina participants who admit not wanting to interact with whites at all, and

therefore do not. However, there are other participants who are not opposed to talking or having white friends, like Gabriela, but still does not have a chance because of segregation norms. An additional quote from Angelica also explains how de facto segregation occurs when students choose seats in a classroom.

Mmm, I feel like they [whites] are just my peers in class, cause even in class, I was telling my friend that no one wants to sit with me because I have my big classes where I like to sit on the edge so I don't have to bother anybody and I can just get up and go. So in that class I have political science hardly anybody sits next to me and if they do it's because there are not enough seats. *What makes you think this is happening?* I don't know, cause I'll look around and there will be plenty of spots, and I'll see them [whites] sitting down other places before they even try [sitting next to her]. And then in my other class, the sociology one. I sit right in the middle, and no one sits next to me either and it's a small class. So there are people in the back, and I sit right in the middle. I see that too and that class I was observing cause there are two other minorities and no one sits next to them too. Cause there is a black guy in front, but there is a black girl that sits next to him. And then there is one Hispanic in the back, and today I don't think, I think only one person was sitting next to her. So you can kinda point it out. *You think this is common experience for students of color here?* Probably at in this school yes, because we are the minority, but maybe I'm overlooking it because I am a minority, and I have that bias in me.

What do you make of it? Why do you think that is happening? I don't know I feel like, as a person you feel just comfortable, like you find something common with someone and that's why you sit with them, you don't really think you're, like you're offending someone while doing it. I know that I sometimes I do it too, and I don't mean anything, I know that I sit next to someone who is like a Hispanic because I know that I can relate to them more. (Alejandra, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Alejandra shows that she thinks about these issues even before the interview. She has started taking account of who sits where in what class, and how other students of color are also treated. Alejandra further uses an explanation that is similar to colorblind interpretations of racism to explain why segregation is occurring in the classroom. She suggests that it is just people sitting next to people that they feel comfortable to, and

includes herself in this phenomena, admitting that she sits next to Hispanics which makes her feel comfortable and able to relate to them. Colorblind interpretations excuse racism or phenomena like segregation as something that occurs naturally. Colorblind interpretations do not allow to get at the heart of why is it more “comfortable” for people of color to sit next to each other, or why whites feel more comfortable with other whites and may avoid sitting next to people of color. What this narrative overall highlights though is how choosing seats in a classroom space that is predominantly white can make Latinos feel that they not belong in that space. Similarly, Arturo also brings up another experience dealing with invisibility even though he is friends with other white students.

Well in general, most of the people on this campus are white, and most people see me walking, me and a white friend. The opposite person will see the other person walking with me, not me, and will nod his head to him. I don't know why. *Did you mention it to the white person you were with?* Yeah they kind of avoided it. They are kind of uncomfortable. They get uncomfortable. *Why do think this happens?* Dude, I don't know. Maybe they feel uncomfortable with you for some reason [in a voice like someone else is saying it]. *Does it bother you that you are ignored while next to your white friend?* I wish these things didn't bother me but I wish they would be a little more... just a simple nod. Arturo, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Arturo expresses bafflement and disappointment at why he is not acknowledged but his white friend is. He also admits that he senses this lack of acknowledgement might be because of white's discomfort with him. I ask him if he ever brought up the situation to his white friends. Arturo once again admits that those topics make whites uncomfortable thus, why his friend avoided giving him an answer. Either way, Arturo admits that it bothers him even though he does not want it bother him. Note that Arturo

is not attacked in anyway racist way (physically or verbally), but the act is a subtle form of ignoring his existence in a predominantly white space.

Furthermore, in the quote below, Carina tells us how Latinos are further ignored in predominantly white spaces from by structural or institutional means. Carina discusses what it is like for her and other Latino friends coming into such a predominantly white campus that caters to the needs of their white students and does not offer Latino students the same experience of fun and excitement about starting a college because of white focused activities.

[PWI] has a reputation for being a friendly campus and I feel like it has this reputation of being homey and welcoming campus, but that hasn't been the experience that I have had. Not that they are hostile, but for example, at [new student orientation] I feel like it was easier for the white students to feel comfortable, and let their guard down and be welcomed into the campus. But I know for me and the other Hispanic students that were there it was so uncomfortable...I guess, like, for one, most of the councilors were white. For them I feel like, minorities have a different experience than white students, cause for them [whites] it's not really like you're leaving home. It's like all the same religion, food, and everything, yes they are leaving home and they will be home sick, but it's not like it is for minority students. It's a transition that is a completely different culture.

And at orientation it was so stressful. Like for me I'm a naturally reserved person, and they had all these little yells and cheers, it was weird. I don't know if it was because everyone there was white, or maybe we [Latinos] just don't enjoy doing that stuff, I don't really know, but my and my Hispanic friends were just sitting there like "what?" And everyone else was going crazy [laughs]. And then every night they would have a little dance in our building. But we didn't even really know how to have fun at the dance because the music they had, like stuff you hear on the radio, but stuff you can't dance to, and the white people they were like having the time of their lives. It was music that you would hear in the club... it was like older songs, like... I can't remember specifically the songs, but for us a party is Spanish music like cumbias and they didn't have that. So for us it was like... we didn't even know what to do with our selves. We only went once or twice, but I guess it was the day before we were going back home where they had a mass party and for the most part they were playing country music and

two stepping and I didn't even know how. And I had never seen that till then, and I thought I guess I'm going to have to learn. (Carina, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Carina demonstrates how difficult it is for some Latino students to relate to the white cultural norms and expectations. Furthermore, how Latinos students feel like they do not belong but being able to relate to the events that focus mostly on white music. Carina also explains a very important part about being Latino entering a predominantly white campus that supports a predominantly white culture. For other white students, yes, they will be home sick, but they will find their culture around them, whereas Latinos not only lose their homes and family like white students, but they also have to lose experiencing their culture and hearing their language. As further proof of the pressures to conform to white norms, Carina ends her narrative saying that she is going to have to learn how to two-step if she is going to want to participate at the parties. Carina is not even a first generation Latina. She is a third plus generation Latina that is U.S. born who still feels the racialized space of PWI as so foreign and white. This is another reason why it is important to take into account the background of a student when analyzing experiences. Carina grew up in an area that is predominantly Latino and Black and always had people of color as friends only. We can see how her experience is very different from another Latino who grew up in a predominantly white environment who is already comfortable with white friends and white culture.

Another important note is that Latinos and Latinas at PWI still had to deal with racist comments even when they are not directly at them personally. This occurred most often in the classroom. Unlike, HSI80 participants, PWI participants had many examples

to give of hearing racist comments as part of class discussions. This is especially difficult because it then places responsibility on Latino or Latina students to decide if they are going to stand up and respond to the racist comment in front of an entire class that is predominantly white, or just sit through the class feeling uncomfortable and exposed. For example, consider Eric's account about dealing with racist comments in the classroom.

Well... you find people every now and then, I'm not saying everyone is like that, but everyone does have their own ideas and their own opinions. So everyone now and then you find someone with certain strong opinions against a certain race or ethnicity or whatever. *Have you come across someone like that?* No, nothing personal, but you hear about it. *Like what? And where?* Like in class, we were talking about, well, my teachers was talking about undocumented immigrants, and some people were actually, behind me were murmuring certain stuff, stuff about, I think it was a girl who said they come here and those without documents get certain stuff free like education. I would have said something if she continued on. But I didn't notice at first, and sometimes it's best not to make too big a deal about stuff, if it's just you know... that sort of stuff. Nothing personal to me. You do encounter that stuff. (Eric, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Eric feels that sometimes it is best to say nothing if comments are not made directly at him. Consider the amount of personal risk it takes for a students of color to stand up in front of a predominantly white class and confront student comments. Even if Eric does not stand up in front of the whole class, but addressed the students after class it still is a risk. Some Latinos and Latinas claim that avoiding being too sensitive or responding to racist comments all time is their way of coping and navigating the racial climate. Imagine the amount of stress if a student of color was going to address every racist comment, subtle or overt. This is similar in a way to Latino and Latina students in the previous chapter who had majority white friends that cope by saying racist incidents "didn't bother them" or excuse their white friends by rationalizing their behavior. There

is a point where if one faces these types of racist incidents (small or big) on a daily basis, battle fatigue may be reached, and the resolution to deal with it is to just keep it moving rather than address every instance.

Below, we have another example of the stresses Latinos and Latinas had to face for being accountable to their race/ethnic background as illustrated by Angelica.

In that class I feel like I just go to the class, like an outcaste, like I don't speak in that class either because I feel like if I say something and it's wrong, then I represent the whole Hispanic community in sociology class. So one time I spoke and I think it was just to like comment, like it wasn't even long, like one short word, but I thought about it a lot before I answered, because I feel like if I do something wrong it would represent like the whole Hispanic group. (Angelica, 2nd Generation, PWI)

Angelica feels that she has to represent the entire Latino community because she is the only Latino in class and feels that she is being judged not as an individual but as a representative for her race. This is a very unfair stress to add to Latinos and other students of color that are a minority in a situation. For Angelica, it is even affecting her performance in the class by being so afraid to say anything, even one word.

Finally, the last quotes come from Carlos and Alex who show different examples of when white students make racist comments in class but are confronted by Latino professors who take it upon themselves to stop the students and correct them.

I think one of them is most people think that Hispanics, uh, they cross the border to do bad things, especially now with the cartels and that stuff, so they think they came here to do illegal things, or to take their jobs. *Have you heard this come up in school?* Yeah actually, I have. It was funny cause, it was in [Latino professors name] class and I think a person said, "oh they are just here taking jobs," and it was cool because [professor name] actually shut them up. [laughs] *Yeah? So how did that make you feel that they brought that up?* I was just thinking that it's ignorant, there are a lot of people that are misinformed, and they just hear things.

And they start creating stereotypes in their heads, like immigrants are here taking our jobs, and it's jobs that they don't even want. You know like my dad, he works a hard job, and I've seen him, he's a construction worker and he buildings the frames of the houses, like that [points to nearby construction] and so at least in Houston I've never seen a white person work as hard like my dad does. I think they just have misconceptions. *So what did it mean to you have someone like [professors name] who is Latino say something?* Yeah, I thought it was really cool, like he is a professor and you can't really argue with him cause he knows what he is talking about. And so I just really thought it was cool. (Carlos , 1st Generation, PWI)

A similar example comes from Alex, who also discusses a situation in the classroom where a female professor countered a student's racist comments with academic background on immigrants.

I took an immigration class and students would say derogatory comments about immigrants and the teacher would have to say, "no look at these studies about immigrants say there are less violent," or less of whatever that person is trying to claim. She'd show that immigrants are not trying to take jobs but actually help to boost the economy, and so every time he [white student making comments] would point out the negative parts of immigration, she would come in and be like actually this is what the studies say. It is annoying just because of the stereotypes that he is trying to perpetuate whereas I'm very thankful to the teacher because no matter how much she got immigrants are this, immigrants are that, she would always back up the defense with studies and say, "you're just giving out a claim without actual fact," and prove that immigrants aren't these, "terrible horrible people that you are trying to make them out to be." Alex

It makes a difference for both Alex and Carlos to have a professor confront the racist assumptions of white students in their classes. In the case of Carlos, the situation is empowering for him because a Latino professor shut down the racist comments. Alex is also impressed with his professor (race unknown) who uses academic arguments to prove a student wrong about their racist assumptions as well. Both these examples illustrate how the classroom is a white racialized space at PWI since white students feel comfortable enough to vocalize their racist opinions. Even more important is how the

racialized space in the classroom as a predominantly white space actually gives power to the white students to make these types of comments to a Latino professor. Racialized space does not just affect Latino and Latina students. It also affects faculty of color who should have more power as faculty, but do not to some extent within white space.

Aside from these issues, analysis of the data reveals that second and third generation Latinos at PWI struggle in a different way compared to first generation Latinos as they seek the company and friendship of first generation Latinos. While there is some conflict between the generations at PWI, the level of conflict is no way at the same compared to HSI80 (immigrant versus U.S. born). Rather, at PWI, the second and third generation participants, including those that do not speak Spanish well, want to connect to other Latinos who speak Spanish despite feeling uncomfortable and judged by the first generation Latinos. The reason several second and third generation Latinos and Latinas give for wanting to create bonds with the first generation is that they miss their home culture, food, and music. Creating relationships with the first generation is a way for them to reconnect with that aspect of their identity within a white racialized space. Examples of their struggle are discussed in further detail later in this chapter in sections that covered how the racialized space affected the racial/ethnic identity.

Overall, the experiences of the Latino and Latinas attending PWI are similar to findings of students at other predominantly white institutions. However, the narratives that this dissertation captures illustrate how racism and discrimination for students of color in a predominantly white space does not always have to be explicit to be harmful. Subtle forms of racism are very much a part of these students' daily lives, as they must

navigate their university's white space that is a constant reminder that they are "other" and not a part of the space. The de-facto segregation at PWI is not enforced by formal laws and regulations, because that is no longer legal. However, there are several social norms in place that rationalize why some white students do not need to greet, interact, or even sit next to some Latinos and Latinas. Furthermore, to listen to racist comments brought up in a classroom is also a constant reminder of the white space and a realization that some of the students sitting around you as a Mexican person feel and think about your race/ethnicity in those racist terms.

Once again, it is important that not all Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin are the same. Because of their differing backgrounds, they navigate racialized spaces and race relations differently. Some Latinos and Latinas at PWI came from majority white high schools and so claim to be more comfortable making only white friends. Their experiences are in some ways similar, but also different compared to other Latino and Latina students who chose to interact minimally with white students. Likewise, it is a different experience for those Latino students who do not try one way or another to be friends exclusively with whites or Latinos, but still feel the impacts of de-facto segregation where whites do not interact or acknowledge them anyway. Overall, there are a variety of coping strategies and techniques that Latino and Latina students employ facing all different kinds of racism that depend on racialized space and their background.

Experiences of Racism Reported at HIS40

Our discussion of HSI40 is last because there is a mixture of experiences that reflect aspects of both HSI80, but mostly PWI. Recall that at HSI40 the Latino student

population is about 40 percent and the white population is 26 percent (Figure 1 pg 38). However, the percentage of the Latino student population only surpassed whites as recent as 2010 (Figure 2, pg 40). Furthermore, HSI40 also started out as a predominantly white institution but the population of Latinos has been on a steady increase while the population of whites is on a steady decrease. The percentage of white faculty (67 percent) is still higher than Latino faculty (11 percent) at all ranks and is not reflective of the student population. The sample collected from this institution is largely male, with only one female participant. However, the majority of participants are second generation and the majority speak Spanish well.

Walking HSI40's campus, you notice diversity in terms of races present in the various spaces. For example, in cafeterias and other student gathering places you notice flyers and posters that are advertising various ethnic group organizations. There are also colorful stable booths are representatives are eat lunch every day to recruit and answer questions about their cultural organizations. Yet, even below the flyers and posters especially for Latino organization events, there are still remnants of its predominantly white past. For example, buildings such as the social science building have their hallways lined with photographs of previous heads of department, all white men. The presidents of the university also displayed are also all white men with the exception of the current president, a Latino man of Cuban decent.

One of this dissertation's main questions is whether the differing racial compositions of a Hispanic Serving Institutions affects racialized experiences for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin. Thus, responses to the exact same questions

asked at the two Hispanic Serving Institutions are carefully weighed, and actually found to be more different rather than similar. There are closer similarities between experiences at PWI and HSI40. HSI40 participants also give several reports of dealing with racist comments on campus and in the classroom perpetrated by white students. Furthermore, participants at HSI40 are able to give me various examples where they sit and listen to white students make racist comments related to immigrants or Latinos in general in a classroom setting. Take for example the following quote from Juan.

I wouldn't say it's [racism on campus] badly but in class when we were talking about immigration, there was this person that was talking about what he thought cops should be doing with illegal immigrants. Like that it was ok for a cop to arrest them if they were illegal immigrants and send them back. But I think the way he was talking it was because he didn't understand it. He doesn't know how us Mexicans, or illegal immigrants, felt when we didn't have a license. He was white, and so yeah, he was just speaking his mind out without knowing. The teacher did not address it really well, she just went on with it to make him realize it in a way, but I know the majority of that class was Hispanics and they were like wow. This same guy in another class I've even heard say the same things again. (Juan, 1st Generation, HSI40)

In this instance, the instructor does not address the situation well in Juan's opinion (instructors race is not recorded). Yet, unlike PWI, Juan says that this class is predominantly Hispanic, which still does not stop the white student from feeling comfortable enough to make these statements in front of the class. Furthermore, other types of uncomfortable classroom incidents that participants at HSI40 report also include white classmates. Take For example how Pricilla explains what it feels like for her to be in classes where there are more whites. The racial demographics of classes change depending on the discipline at HSI40 according to students. For example, Juan is talking about asocial science class that is majority Latinos. However, Pricilla is a nursing major

and therefore takes more science and nursing courses where she encounters more white students. Pricilla discusses how she feels intimidated many times in class with white students.

I mean, I think I have felt it, that I'm not good enough, cause I feel it all the time, and cause I have been intimidated by the white people in my classes, and I feel not good enough. I do have people tell me that I am, but there is that struggle where I feel like I'm not good enough. *When do you feel like that here in college?* All the time. Growing up I wasn't doing as well as I was supposed to [in school], and I was trying hard to participate and raise questions. And growing up more and more now I suddenly started getting more shy [in college], and it swallowed me and so it's been a struggle. I'm the student that takes notes in the lectures up front, but I don't participate a lot or ask questions... I feel like it's always white kids that are raising their hands to talk, and I was thinking I can relate to what's being said, but I felt intimidated to talk. I think I was intimidated by the more vocal, and what I thought were the more intelligent white students. *Do the white students look down on the Latino students?* Well, there is, like this story about this white kid in my classes and he was always raising his hand and asking questions, and he was smart, he was a good student. And I remember when we took a test and we got the same score, and we got like 94 and he sat next me, and we were the only ones in the class with that score, and he said to me, "oh so how long did you have to study to get that score? Cause I didn't study." And I was like, "I didn't study either." So I was like, asshole. But I don't know if it's cause he is white and he thinks he is better than the world. (Pricilla, 2nd Generation, HSI40)

Pricilla's narrative shows that she already is slightly insecure due her earlier perceived poor performance in high school. However, this insecurity is amplified when she deals with her white classmates whom she perceives to be more intelligent because of their frequent participation in class. Speaking with Pricilla more about her background as a student, it turns out that she is not a failing student. After all, she explains receiving a 94 on a chemistry exam that she really did not spend that much time studying. According to Pricilla's narrative, she feels that the white student is looking down on her assuming that she could not have gotten the same high score he did had she

not studied for a very long time. There could be several factors at work here, since Pricilla is a female in a chemistry class, and she is Latina. The stereotype is that Latinos and Latinas are not smart. In fact, her narrative about being afraid to participate in class with other white students is similar to Angelica from PWI above. The stakes of speaking in class are very high for the only Latino in class, as you feel like you represent all Latinos. Thus, the fear of saying something wrong not only potentially makes you look bad but also all Latinos or Latinas that you feel you are representing.

Once again, the student's perception of the space, and how to navigate it, really depends on their background. Recall, David, a second generation Latino from HSI40 who reports mostly having white friends because he feels judged by Mexicans who speak Spanish. David also has to deal with racist comments from his white friends and roommates at HSI40. However, despite these similarities of dealing with racism on a daily basis, at HSI40 there are less narratives about isolation overall. Rather, first generation college students specifically express these feelings of being lost at HSI40. For these students in particular, they feel that there is a lack of support from the institution and even find it difficult to fit in with the rest of the students. Take for example Jose who speaks best about how other first generation college students feel at HSI40.

I think the biggest issue for me is being the actual first and current student in college from my whole family, and the biggest thing is knowing what to do, what your next step should be. And a lot of people who have been here for more generations have a parent, a *tio*, an aunt, a cousin that they can talk even if they don't guide them they can talk about it in their dinner or gather. But people like me? I've learned but I still don't know everything or the next step. And I'm sure I've had a little more access than some people. And there's a bunch of degrees of who has access. For me it would be having information or having someone guide you or someone interested in you in wanting you to succeed as someone with

those barriers. And I feel that I have had to go around there barriers on my own here. I don't think college, especially the city college, and I don't know that there might be a department here that would be available for that, but I just don't know where that is. So everyone knows financial aid is there, and loans are available. That's the first thing they ask you, do you wanna a loan, you wanna be in debt with me? How about you teach me how to manage this and then offer me a loan. But info like that it's not available and I don't know where it's at. And if I don't know where it's at, then it's nonexistent to me. I didn't even know what classes I had to take. The biggest thing is not having guide here. (Jose, 2nd Generation, HSI40)

These feelings of being “lost” and with nowhere to turn expressed by first generation college students is not heard at PWI or HSI80. At PWI the majority of participants are first generation college students as well yet the struggles they discuss are more about dissatisfaction with the institutions lack of diversity, and not so much about a lack of resources to assist in how to be a college student. Students at both Hispanic Serving Institutions tend to be the most nontraditional students as they have families and jobs outside of their responsibilities of being students. These factors, contribute to the slow graduation rates for Latinos at these institutions. Latino and Latina students at PWI though overall reflect more traditional students who do not have families of their own including child obligations, are supporting other family members, or employed full time as a student. It may be the case that HSI40 does not have programs or resources visible enough for first generation and nontraditional college students. Also at HSI80, such concerns are also not reported by the first generation college students in the sample perhaps because this institution had programs and resources already established for dealing with students from that background since most students in that institution are not traditional students.

Another difference at HSI40 compared to HSI80 is how there is not an as intense conflict on campus between the Mexican born and the U.S. born Latinos. Recall that David does say that he has felt judged by other Latinos all his life, but none of the participants from HSI40 discuss being segregated into groups amongst themselves. Once again, this may be because of geographical location of HSI80 and that there are that many more Latinos who are both Mexican and U.S. born interacting on campus on a daily basis.

Overall, HSI40 participants report more similar experiences with those participants from PWI, than they do with HSI80. This will become clearer in the following section where HSI40 participants discuss how they feel their institution's racialized space impacts their racial/ethnic identity. Therefore, the final conclusion about HSI40, is that even though HSI40 is a Hispanic Serving Institution with a 40 percent Latino student population, several of the challenges they express dealing with racism on campus and in the classroom are more similar to PWI. The small sample collection for HSI40 can be considered a limitation but, I strongly believe that from the narratives that are captured, especially about impacts on racial/ethnic identity below, that the experience of being at HSI40 overall is closer to that of PWI than it is to HSI80.

How Racial/Ethnic Identity Is Impacted by the Racialized Space

One of the final questions this dissertation study sought to answer is how racialized space influences Latinos and Latinas racial/ethnic identity at the different institutions. Furthermore, the racial/ethnic identity portion of the interview is towards the end. This is done so that students would have already recalled their experiences at their

institutions and be less likely to give general responses. How the university has influenced their racial/ethnic identity is a totally new concept for the majority of participants. Many say they had never thought about it. However, after several thoughtful moments, participants are very open and willing to discuss their experiences. Thus, even though their racial/ethnic identity development is not something they thought about before, the majority definitely have insightful responses.

Recall, that students can racially/ethnically identify anyway that they chose. This section is not concerned so much whether students change racial/ethnic identity labels during college, but rather if and how the participants feel the university space made them feel stronger, weaker, closer, more distant, or no changes towards their racial/ethnic identity. While measures such as, “stronger” and “weaker” are relative, many follow-up questions are asked to certify clarity and understand how and why the students feel the way they do about their identity now having been exposed to their college campus. Furthermore, it is important to have relative measures since the background of each student’s experience is so different, and any questions that are tailored to a specific group might bias the response. For example, students who came from already predominantly white high schools feel PWI impacts their identity differently than a student who had come from a predominantly Latino or Black high school. Similarly, a first generation Latino student attending HSI40 feels very differently about how the institution impacts his identity compared to a 3+ generation Latino. The questions on influence are worded in several ways to try to capture the best way the students feel they can answer the questions to reflected their experience and what they attribute the

changes specifically to in the institution. Some responses are very specific, and others slightly more ambiguous.

Findings for this section are influenced by responses in previous chapters as they are all interlinked and analyzed as a whole experience. Overall, findings on racial/ethnic development suggest that there are more similar reported impacts and overall experiences between participants at HSI40 and PWI compared to HSI80. The three major themes found for participants at PWI and HSI40 include: (1) Lack of hearing or speaking Spanish and Mexican food access as negative impact on their racial/ethnic identity. (2) There are strong feelings for all that you had to change your personality or identity in order to better fit into the campus culture. And (3), a positive effect on identity is how the racialized space made some more aware and proud of their culture and racial/ethnic identity. This is the case for many second and third generation Latinos. Sometimes these themes overlap in any particular quote.

To begin with, the most common report is the lack of hearing/speaking Spanish and having limited access to Mexican food from HSI40 and PWI participants. Even though these may seem like minor findings to some, the reality is that research keeps highlighting how important the Spanish language is a very important part of identity for Mexican origin. As we have seen even in this dissertation study, Latinos and Latinas in previous chapters often use Spanish-speaking capabilities as a marker for how “Mexican” one is. Racialized space can greatly affect how or when what languages are used the most and the least or not all. Recall, in a previous description of HSI80 that Spanish is very audible just walking on campus and hearing students speak in personal

conversation in public campuses spaces. Asking students at HSI80 if they ever feel embarrassed about speaking Spanish often times is responded to with a confused look because Spanish is actually a necessity to belong and navigate the campus culture. However, HSI40 the visibility of Spanish language is not seen beyond a few flyers for Latino cultural events. Furthermore, at PWI, there is actually negative responses from white students if they heard Spanish. PWI participants report uncomfortable stares from white students, which bother some participants to the point where they do not speak Spanish in public.

Additionally, the basic roots of any culture is not just language but also the food. It is very evident that there are no Mexican or Latino food options at PWI in any of their cafeterias. For HSI40 there are a few food options in the common halls but they are mostly commercial versions of Mexican food. More traditional food could be found around off campus, but is not easily accessible as it is at HSI80 are all major food establishments on campus had traditional Mexican food and drink very accessible. When food is not available it made several participants feel like they are actually not practicing their culture. Responses like the following quotes seems very basic but food and language are important parts of practicing a culture which actually made students feel “less X identity.”

I guess I feel less [Hispanic] cause back home because I can be with family and there they are all speaking Spanish, and my being here, even though I live with my sister and roommate, and sometimes we do speak Spanish, it's really not a lot, and I doing it more makes me feel more Hispanic back home. (Pricilla 2nd Generation HSI 40)

Sometimes I feel less [Mexican] because obviously I'm not eating the [Mexican] food, I'm just eating whatever I can, and I speak less Spanish because in my

house my mom only speaks in Spanish and that's how we communicate. (Juan 1st Generation HSI 40)

For both Pricilla and Juan the role of their families should also be considered important since it is with their family that they found themselves being able to practice their identity more and feel more connected or stronger to their racial/ethnic identity back at home than when they are on campus. For some students, it is not necessarily that the changes in their identity are stable changes, but are greatly impacted by the space they are in. Thus, many students are able to identify with the question that asks if they feel more, less, or the same connected to their identity at home compared to on campus. For students at HSI40 and especially at PWI who came from majority Latino backgrounds, they certainly feel they had less and more depending on the context they are in because the racialized space is calling for that adjustment. Furthermore, the lack of Spanish and food also impacts Latino and Latina participants in differing ways such as the following quote from Jose.

I think it [education/ institution] is set up for us to forget where we come from. There isn't a lot... we tend always end up always assimilating. I feel like its set up for us to not stay rooted. Especially when there's obstacles and challenges like the stereotypes and discriminations. And then there is something in your brain that just triggers you need to fit in, and the more you do that the more you assimilate culture, the more you forget your roots... But then it changes, *el lenguaje*, if you are only speaking English, then it kinda something in your brain, you can't stop it. The more English you speak the more... the more I feel separated from my family and roots, no the more I feel there is barrier not separated. (Jose, 1st Generation HSI 40)

Jose illustrates the pressures of needing to “assimilate” where he feels that the institution has already been set up to force assimilation. This is a critique that has been offered by other Latino scholars who are critical of the white European curriculum and

structure of education in the U.S. that forces students who want to be successful to adopt white cultural norms, beliefs, and practices. Furthermore, Jose goes much deeper to explain how having to speak English is messing with his “brain” and making him feel less connected to his roots and even separated from his family. Once again, we see the importance of the role of the Latino family to feel connected to one’s culture and racial/ethnic identity for those Latinos and Latinas who came from households where Spanish and Mexican traditions and customs are still practiced. Below are another set of examples.

Arturo also speaks about how he feels that he must become a different person at PWI in the quote below.

Oh definitely more connected when I’m at home. Yeah, that’s my land, that’s where I grew up. The way I talk, if was talking to you in [hometown] I would be talking to you different, speaking differently. I would change my accent, the words I say, my expressions just because, well [home town] has its own little culture, like little sub culture. Yeah I definitely feel more Mexican when I’m there [home]... Well they [family] say that I speak English like a gringo [laughs]. Because how everyone speaks English differently there. So I guess, I’m always kind of “Mexico Texan” around them [family], and they’ve never seen me around white people or others, so maybe that’s why they don’t say that I’ve changed. (Arturo, 2nd Generation PWI)

Arturo additionally gives several examples of how he feels that not only how he talks, but his accent and even his expressions would change where he would feel more “Mexican” or “Mexico-Texan” when he is home or with his family. Furthermore, he admits that his family does not think that he has changed, although he mentions during the interview that he feels that had and did at PWI, but his family never sees him around whites to be able to make that comparison. These quotes highlight how the changes in racial/ethnic identity are actually fluid and could be restored for some participants once

they are reunited in spaces and with persons that allowed them to express the racial/ethnic identity that they feel they really are.

For some participants, they actually feel that the predominantly white space actually made them more aware and appreciative of their racial/ethnic identity for various reasons. For example, consider the following quotes from Mark and Carina.

I feel less, because in my home my parents speak Spanish, and that's all I do with them. And here I remember that it was deep into the semester my first year here, I started mispronouncing my last name because other people would say it wrong, and I caught myself and said no I need to say it right. I didn't want to identify that I was not Hispanic [pounces his full name in Spanish]... If anything it's made me realize it's more important to hold on that I'm Hispanic, especially since I could easily lose that identity in this sea of white. Here at PWI you are with different people around another environment that changes your thoughts about things. (Mark, 2nd Generation, PWI)

I guess... here, I feel like my Hispanic identity is more important to me here, and I protect it more here... I feel for the most part us Hispanics at this university are always on the lookout, just on guard, you know, just to be sure that our race, our culture isn't being insulted. But back home I feel more Hispanic though because I'm surrounded by things that are more represented in the culture. (Carina, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Both Mark and Carina come from predominantly Latino backgrounds where their high schools are mostly Latino. In the case of Carina, she explained that before she really had not thought about her racial/ethnic identity because she is just like everyone else that is around her and that she stuck out more at PWI, which made her more aware of her identity. There are several other participants who made this claim that they actually liked how they feel different at PWI rather than being white like everyone else. Furthermore, Mark's quote further illustrates how not using Spanish made him start mispronouncing his own name, which made him realize how important it is for him to maintain his culture and identity that he is a Hispanic. Overall, both quotes from Carina

and Mark illustrate the concept of, “you don’t know what you have until you lose it.”

This theme of feeling less Mexican in the space, but yet at the same time more connected is something specific to Latinos and Latinas who had come from predominantly Latino high schools before. For an example of a common response from a Latino or Latina who had already come from a predominantly white high school read Sonia’s quote below from PWI, and Christian’s quote from HSI40.

I probably feel about the same, maybe a little bit less just because I’ve really adopted country music. I love country music now. And I got my first break out movie, and I learned how to two step from my uncles, and now I go to [country club], as to before I would have gone to a regular hip hop club or something. So if anything, it’s not that I disregarded my Mexican culture, I just adopted [university name] culture. I pushed mine off to get a new one [laughs]. (Sonia, 3+ Generation, PWI)

I can speak phrases of Spanish... I don’t know... it’s hard to say, because it’s one culture it’s a continuum that I can move about. So the whole thing about being European. No [I don’t feel any more or any less Mexican than when I am home versus here]. I can be what I want to be here, both. (Christian HSI40)

In the case of Sonia, at PWI, she claims that she feels about the same now as before being enrolled at PWI. But, even Sonia at PWI hints to the fact that she has had to adopt her culture to the white country culture her university. She phrases this though as, “I pushed mine off to get a new one.” This phrase just like many of the other quotes about feeling less or more connected to their “x” racial/ethnic identity is really talking about integration. How strong or compelling are the pressures of integration as part of the campus culture. Evidently, at PWI and HSI40 the pressures to integrate or adopt to the predominantly white culture is still very strong since forced many participants to report needing to change who they are and adopt different ways of speaking or even thinking to function in at the university. The interview questions ask students if they feel

they needed to change who they are to fit into the campus culture better, and for the most part, most would say no. However, later when discussing their racial/ethnic identity specifically in relation to the space, the responses revealed that several actually do feel this even though they are not initially aware. This is another instance where analyzing the data is done carefully.

Furthermore, Christian in the quote above also admits that he has a hard time telling as he cannot feel any more or less connected to his racial/ethnic identity that already functions on a continuum where he claims he can talk to white students as easily as he can with other Mexican students. However, at HSI40, more Mexican origin culture is visible compared to PWI. Though nowhere near as much visibility as HSI80. Thus, it maybe the case that at HSI40 a student that is connected to their Mexican background and identity, but also used to the cultural norms and expectations of dealing in white institutions may feel like there is very little difference.

The final theme more specifically relates to generational status and to PWI. It is common for second and third generation Latino and Latina participants at PWI to find their lack of speaking Spanish or knowing the traditional culture of Mexico as a barrier when attempting to make friendships or relationships with first generation Latinos. For example, the case of Blanca below who is struggling to make friends with other Latinas.

I feel like the fact that I don't speak Spanish fluently is a really big... I feel like I kinda isolate myself... like I'm isolated from my own race sometimes... but I didn't intentionally do that. It's just because at home I was never forced to speak Spanish at home... At [Latina Sorority] meeting and it is kinda like the same thing over there. I just can't bond... I'm not sure if it's a Mexican thing, or them, but I just don't like so much of the music they listen to, I guess like, um Spanish music I don't listen to that much, only the ones like from my childhood... that's what they bond on... I feel like if I at least know the language I could feel more

connected... If anything I feel that I need to bring it ["Mexican-ness"] out more, because I feel that I am too Americanized. I never felt like I had to hide my Hispanic identity to fit in, but I need to be more Mexican in order to fit in.
(Blanca, 3+ Generation, PWI)

Blanca came from a more white high school environment and has a long history of having Mexicans tell her she is not really Mexican because she cannot speak Spanish very well. Despite this, unlike other Latino and Latina participants like Alex who preferred to hang out with whites, Blanca wants to hang out with other Latinos. For some second, but especially the third generation, their struggle at PWI is to gain acceptance from the first generation Latinos. Thus, they are caught in the middle, where they do not identify with the campus white culture, and are trying to connect to Mexican culture where they could find it, but also feel like they really do not fit. Feeling constantly they are not Mexican enough is an obstacle, but is also something they reported as contributing to their drive and strengthen or grow their Mexican identity. These participants are often ones that had no interest making friends exclusively with whites, and thus do not talk so much as previous students do about feeling that they had to hide, or down play their Mexican culture and identity to integrating to the white cultural norms of the campus. Rather, within their enclaves that they spend the majority of their time, isolated from the white campus and their traditions, these students struggled to reconnect to their Mexican roots, and therefore feel that even though they could feel less Mexican compared to their group, they feel more Mexican for trying to connect.

Unlike the themes found at HSI40 and PWI that are very similar, the themes at HSI80 are completely different in respect to how students feel the university had affected their racial/ethnic identity. These participants do not talk about not being able to speak Spanish, or not having access to Mexican food because both these items are very much available on campus. Mexican food could be easily accessible and be authentic from two central locations for students. Recall also that Spanish is very common to hear on campus. Additionally, these students do not talk about feeling that they had to change who they are to better fit into the campus culture, or that they really had to change who they are at home from who they are at HSI80. Rather, the themes related to racial/ethnic identity development for students at HSI80 are: (1) Students reported developing their identity and even pride since being at the institution. And (2), The third generation here also had a unique struggle with not feeling Mexican enough or being able to fit into the campus culture. Especially, if they do not speak Spanish.

First, read the following quotes from participants who claim how they feel more connected to their racial/ethnic identity for various reasons.

I started calling myself Chicano after I read the book [*Drink Cultura* in a university class], and it was so quick right after the book, because used to call myself Mexican American, but then I totally changed my mind with the book... I found an identity after I read that book, I had never heard about that book, I discovered more about my culture and who I wanted to be. (Ruben, 1st Generation, HSI80)

Here [university], it helped me realize that I identify more with the Chicano more than the Mexican or even the Mexican American. *How did the university help you do that?* It's kind of hard to explain. You feel it around here. You go to a class and you see that half the students are Mexican and half white. The teacher is Mexican or Mexican American but he speaks Spanish, and sometimes he says something in Spanish in class to maybe to add more sense to it, or to, it's hard to explain. I think that people say that you feel it. (Daniel, 1st Generation, HSI80)

I actually feel more, I took a Spanish language class here, and realized I want to practice my Spanish more, I mean it wasn't a big difference, because I tend to talk more in Spanish to my friends even though they understand, but don't speak it, so I started to feel more comfortable.... It's not like I have to change my personality to change. I mean like when I come over here, ah, when I do feel when I connect to my Mexican identity is like when I'm with my friends cause we talk in Spanish or in English, when I'm with them. And most of my professors in the Social Science department, they know Spanish too, and I do hear or we are learning about Mexican culture. (Angie, 2nd Generation, HSI80)

Yes, coming to this school yes, definitely, not so much the students I hang out with, but being mentored by a Mexican, [says female professors name]. She takes so much pride in her being Mexican, and in that sense, she has encouraged me to really learn more about it, and that has made me really take ownership of learning about my culture and my ethnicity. (Christina, 1st Generation, HSI80)

Notice, that in all four of the quotes, the student somehow talks about using school resources that helped them shape their racial/ethnic identity. For the most part these students are very excited to speak to me about how they feel the institution had helped them develop a strong and positive identity. It is surprising to find the same response even from the first generation (immigrant) group. This might be because of the fact that there is a large percentage of Mexican immigrant students on the campus compared to the other institutions. Daniel's quote above really shows the difference in the university culture where he explains that even his teachers will sometimes speak Spanish in the class to add more sense to a topic. Angie talks about how her professors mostly know Spanish as well. Other participants would mention that even white professors on campus knew some Spanish at least. And Christina even talks about how being mentored by a Mexican professor has encouraged her to learn more about her culture and ethnicity. The above quotes are the types of responses given to the same

interview questions related to how Latinos and Latinas feel impacted by the university that produced the previous responses from HSI40 and PWI.

A final example comes from Sara, who preciously explained to us how she had been anti-Mexican before she came to the university because she had internalized so many of the negative stereotypes especially about Mexican immigrants. Her quote is example of the struggle that some third generation Latinos at HSI80 reported facing in a campus environment that is predominantly Latino.

My family is not very “cultural” like we don’t really celebrate Mexican holidays, and my family didn’t teach us Spanish growing up and they were always like you don’t need to know Spanish, you are in the U.S... I would have a lot issues with kids because I didn’t speak Spanish, people would always call me a *gringa* and say, “oh your dumb, your such a bad Mexican, your dumb”. So I was like I don’t want to be Mexican, I’ll be American, and from then on I didn’t want to be referred to as Mexican because they don’t like me anyways. But now, I actually just had this conversation with my mom two days ago, I said, mom I really hate you, no dislike you, I dislike that you didn’t teach me Spanish. So I’m applying to program here that’s about border regions, and I need to know Spanish to get by, and I feel like you guys deprived me of getting to know myself better as a Mexican American. So I want to get to know that part of myself now, and so I’m trying to learn Spanish now. (Sara, 3+ Generation, HSI80)

This struggle in some ways is similar to those third generation participants at PWI who wanted to connect more to their roots by talking to the first generation. Yet, at HSI80 the necessity to be able to speak Spanish is in some cases even more an important part of being a student unlike either of the other institutions. HSI80 has quite a few programs that require students to know Spanish as several works or projects are turned in in Spanish. Recall, the description of HSI80 in chapter III that explains how there is a Border Studies Program in the social science departments, and that there is a Spanish focused Creative Writing master’s program. One could not do a Creative Writing

master's program successfully, if one does not know at least some Spanish. Here, at HSI80, it is the third generation Latinos who do not know Spanish or not well enough in their own self-perception, or who do not practice Mexican culture who feel that they needed to change to fit the campus climate. But in the case of Sara, this is positive, as recall she explained earlier that since coming to HSI80 and learning about Mexican immigrants in the U.S. she realized she had been wrong about a lot of the stereotypes and actually feel bad for thinking the way used to and started to identify as Mexican again.

Conclusion

This dissertation study is heavily focused on racialized space and its impacts on racial/ethnic identity for Latinos of Mexican origin. Talking into consideration all the experiences reported at each one of the institutions, it is clear that racialized space is very much a real concept that shapes the way people interact, think, and feel. There is no doubt after reading the experiences of Latinos and Latinas at PWI, regardless of background differences, that the racialized space is white, which reflect the predominately white student body and institutions as a whole. Additionally, the experiences at HSI80 also show us that the racialized space there is very nuanced in the sense that it a Mexican origin racialized space. However, it too is not completely free from the white racial frame assumptions, narratives, and feelings that produce racism. This is largely because the dominant media in the U.S. is still influenced by affluent white viewpoints that continue to spread colorblind framing and the narratives, imagery, and feelings rooted in racism within the white racial frame.

In case of HSI40, even though it has a large body of Latino students, they have not been the majority long enough to bring about institutional changes that better reflect the needs of the Latino community. For example, HSI80 has several institutional changes that actually support a Mexican origin campus culture. For example, the fact that many programs and courses required the use of Spanish is already a big difference from the other institutions. As mentioned before, you cannot get a Creative Writing master's degree if you do not know Spanish at HSI80. Additionally, several participants talk about how even their professors will use Spanish in the classroom when the course has nothing to do with Spanish or Mexican culture. Furthermore, the institution supported several traditional Mexican food options all across campus.

Thus, it is clear from the results, that it is not only having the majority of the population that makes an institution's space reflect that population. But, there also needs to be support from the administration in an institution of higher education that starts to change the actual landscape and curriculum, programs, and organizations that actually reflect that population. HSI40 had a large number of Latinos, but it had not had that majority long enough to trigger a need for the administration to respond to respond to this population. As mentioned before in Chapter II, several institutions that are in locations where there is a large Latino population are not prepared to deal with the influx of Latino students who are to start attending in the near future. The findings in this dissertation overall support the concept that institutions of higher education will change a predominantly white campus culture, only once there are enough Latinos in the population for many years to force those changes. How long though? And exactly how

many Latinos in the majority does it take? Those are questions that need to be answered with further research beyond this dissertation study that sets the ground for such questions.

Furthermore, the racialized spaces certainly impact racial/ethnic identity development for participants in this study in positive and negative ways. Considering the overall experiences reported in this dissertation study, participants at HSI40, and especially PWI, report more negative impacts on their racial/ethnic identity overall. Recall, how both incidents at the interpersonal level, but even the overall campus culture that exposed these participants to more racism. And that even though there are many reports about how internalized racism still affected participants at HSI80 at the interpersonal level, there is actually more support for Mexican culture overall from an institutional level compared to PWI and then HSI40. This is something that is definitely different than the literature on Hispanic Serving Institutions so far that claim there is no difference between HSIs and predominantly white institutions. If previous studies are using institutions like HSI40, then the conclusion is similar, but not if a Hispanic Serving Institution like HSI80 is going to be the sample.

The way Hispanic Serving Institutions are studied needs to change, where there needs to be more distinction between the institutions. In fact, perhaps dropping the Hispanic Serving Institution label from analysis completely since it provides false expectations about the institution as a designation that only require 25 percent of Latinos in the students body and no mission statements specific to fit the needs of the Latino community. Racialized space is created not only by the majority of bodies present, but

also by the institution, and both interpersonal and institutions racialized experiences have positive and negative impacts on racial/ethnic identity development for students of color. This understanding shapes the way the Hispanic Serving Institutions should be studied in the future.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This dissertation is inspired by the lack of clarity of Latino and Latina college students' experiences at Hispanic Serving Institutions. Research on predominantly white college and university institutions clearly show that Latino and Latina students continue to face both interpersonal and institutional racism and discrimination. However, research on Hispanic Serving Institutions never clearly discusses experiences of racism or discrimination. Furthermore, research is also unclear if Hispanic Serving Institutions are better, similar, or worse environments for the academic and social development of Latino students. Through interviewing several Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin in the Southwest, and doing extensive analysis of racial climates at the three universities, evidence suggests that not all Hispanic Serving Institutions offer the same experiences. These institutions thus should not be lumped together in research or discussed in a homogenous way.

Additionally, this dissertation highlights the importance of theorizing and developing concepts such as racialized space within education. Racialized space does not only include the racial composition of bodies in one point in time, but across generations. Racialized space is also understood in terms of how institutions and structures support, destroy, create, or maintain various racial climates apart from social

norms. The overall campus climate, which includes the racial climate of an institution of higher learning has several impacts on their students. For students of color entering higher education, they are more likely to face challenges entering institutions and spaces that are not originally designed to support their cultural backgrounds (except HBSCUs and Tribal Colleges). Research on HBSUs tells us that they are important spaces that allow for the positive social and psychological development for Black students who are exposed to positive images and narratives, and overall institutional support focusing on their race which has been degraded across centuries in the U.S. It seems that institutions can do the same for other students of color, including those of Mexican origin, and more care needs to be taken in the research of these types of institutions for Latinos.

The two Hispanic Serving Institutions chosen for this dissertation are different not only in racial composition of student body and faculty, but they are also different in the length of time that Latinos have been the majority percentage enrolled in the institution. It is believed that the geographical location, the length of time, and the sheer majority of Latinos as HSI80 made is a very different experience for Latinos and Latinas overall compared to HSI40. It is true though that one of the limitations of this study is the lack of funding, and therefore the lack of being able to make continuous trips to collect more interviews from HSI40 where students preferred to do interviews in person rather than over phone or skype. Yet, enough narratives are collected to see distinct themes that demonstrated how experiences in terms of the racialized space impacted Latinos and Latinas from different backgrounds differently and similarly from PWI and HSI40. Thus, continuing to collect data from other Hispanic Serving Institutions that are

also 30, 40, 50, and even 60 percent Latino in order to make further comparisons across racial compositions and racial climates. By doing these kinds of studies we can further develop not only literature and theory on concepts such as racialized space, but maybe more importantly use findings to promote institutions or policy changes better suit the needs of the Latino community in up and coming and current Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Thus, this dissertation contributes to the literature on Latino and Latina education, and on Hispanic Serving Institutions, this dissertation has also made contributions related to how millennial Latino and Latino college students utilize and perceive racial/ethnic labels, and how what racial ideologies they use to explain experiences of racism and discrimination. In terms, of racial and ethnic identity labels and how the utilize them, this dissertation study find context greatly matters. Context shaped by the racial or national background of the study, and even racialized space impacted the labels that Latino and Latina college students choose to use in any given situation. Thus, this further parallels other new research that finds similar findings on how Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin overall use a variety of labels rather than always just one. Furthermore, that these labels all have very specific meanings can be interpreted from both the white racial frame and from Latino's counter frames. Racial/ethnic labels for Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. are ranked in a hierarchy of stigma where some labels within the white racial frame are perceived to be more negative and threatening to whites than others (Hispanic versus Latino versus Mexican).

Thus, Latinos and Latinas have to constantly navigate these frames and be aware of what the racial/ethnic labels mean in any given situation when dealing whites, other Latinos, or even other Latinos that have internalized racial stereotypes about Latinos to be able to answer the simple question, “what are you?” The complexity and nuances of this thinking process is captured through these interviews and suggests that future research in identity should consider how context especially in terms of racial background of space and audience shapes how individuals answer. That racial/ethnic identity is not something that is purely internal of oneself, but is impacted not just in within interactions at an interpersonal level, but also connected to interpretations and social created racial hierarchy in the U.S. social structure.

Additionally, this dissertation finds support for other research that shows how college Latino and Latina millennials find it difficult to define racism and racial discrimination. Furthermore, that their first inclination is to define such concepts with colorblind and mainstream interpretations. However, this dissertation study does find a difference based on the background of participants that influenced whether a student explained their own experiences racism and racial discrimination more from a colorblind frame or a counter frame. Participants that report having majority white friends in college, and also from coming majority white high schools tended to avoid discussing racism in a critical manner which would have been more similar to counter framing. Instead these participants, while still able to identify racist incidents, are more reluctant to critically analyze the situation and most of the time excuse the racist behavior by using sometimes explanations from the colorblind framing. Whereas, participants that

report coming from a majority Latino high school, or report having more Latino friends in college, are more likely to use counter framing to interpret their experiences that allowed them to be far more critical of the actors.

This dissertation described the phenomena above related to coping techniques for dealing with racist experiences that occur on a day to day basis. Far more Latino and Latina participant at PWI and HSI40 report having a majority of white friends, or coming from a majority white high school. Participants from PWI thus are far more likely to use racist incidents that happen with white friends, which contributes to their coping techniques to emphasize to themselves that such incidents do not bother them, and then offer rationalizations to excuse their friends' racist behaviors. Other students from HSI80 and participants that reporting more Latino friends at PWI and HSI40 do not do this and instead showed that they are well versed in home culture framing that linked the struggled and history of Latino people's in the U.S. and are critical. Counter framing is a coping technique in itself for explaining and dealing with racism on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, those Latinos at PWI with more white friends and attended majority white schools may not have had as much practice or been that well versed with counter frames. Thus, why they used different narratives to cope with racism they are experiencing on a daily basis.

Understanding the framing that Latino and Latina participants use to interpret their experiences with racism and discrimination is central to answering the overall main questions related to whether students at Hispanic Serving Institutions also experienced racism like students at predominantly white institutions, and how racialized space

impacts racial/ethnic identity formation. Understanding their framing is important because in order to assess the overall experiences at each institution, sometimes I have to go beyond what it is the students are saying and analyze the responses carefully.

Thus, coming to the conclusion that experiences with racism and discrimination are more similar between participants at HSI40 and PWI, yet it is more at an extreme at PWI where students face invisibility, marginalization, and navigating their way through socially norms that encouraged racial segregation on campus. Furthermore, that students at HSI80 are not completely free from racism and discrimination, as several Latinos and Latinas have internalized racist images, narratives, and even feelings from the white racial frame towards themselves and even other Mexican immigrants. Thus, forms of racism and discrimination are still occurring on campus even though they are not being perpetuated by whites, which may have been the reason why participants at HSI80 continued to tell me that there is racism or discrimination on campus. Furthermore, internalized racism as well generational cultural differences are very strong at HSI80 also created conflict and segregation in some cases between first and later generation Latinos.

In the end, the experiences of racism and discrimination at the structural and interpersonal level does impact the racial/ethnic identity development for Latinos and Latinas at HSI40 and especially at PWI. The racialized space that is still largely white driven and focuses on the comfort of white students left Latino and Latina participants feeling like they do not belong or that they have to change in order to better fit into college culture. Latinos and Latinas at HSI80 experienced less racism at the structural

level in the that they have plenty of organizations, events, programs, and resources available through the institutions that assisted them in exploring and even celebrating a Mexican or a version of Mexican racial/ethnic identity.

It is a very high price to pay for some Latinos and Latinas who continue onto higher education where they feel that they must change or that they cannot celebrate or practice their racial/ethnic identity. The age at which these young adults are also going through college is a time where they creating an identity that is separate from what their parents or families have always told them, and to go into environments that are not tolerant or set up celebrate their culture but hide it or even just ignore it can be brutal. This dissertation shows that the lack of programs, curriculum focused on Mexican issues, cultural organizations, or even cultural events for Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin does not assist college students in exploring their identity in positive ways. It is not fair to say that students at PWI or HSI40 are not exploring their racial/ethnic identity. Students are exploring their identities, but in more of a vacuum without the evident support from the institution. For them, they have to find support by making connections with other Latino students who are interested in doing the same (like the third generation at PWI), and do so through the few cultural organizations or Latina sororities that there are available to them.

Future Implications for Latino Education and Hispanic Serving Institutions

There will need to be major changes in the K-12 levels to solve one of the bigger issues in Latino education, which will be to get Latinos and Latinas that graduate high school into college in more proportionate numbers to their national population,

especially for those of Mexican origin. Additionally, creating awareness for financial support for college to even be an option for many Latinos and Latinas that do graduate. Yet, addressing those issues will only be the beginning of improvement to the American education system that has failed Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin over many decades. Largely because even just getting Latinos and Latinas to a point where college education (especially at a 4 year institutions) is possible, once getting there Latinos and Latinas still face a whole new set of obstacles that can result in their dropping out rather than graduating. Furthermore, the increasing numbers of Latinos and Latinas in higher education is an improvement, but it is still not comparable to the growing numbers of the Latino population in the U.S. that do not go to college. Having at least a bachelor's degree is arguably becoming a necessity in the U.S. in order to be competitive for employment. Furthermore, education is the key to social mobility for many that continue onto to professional degrees.

So what is the future of Latino education in the U.S.? It's difficult to tell, but many institutions will have to start making changes in terms of their structure and curriculum as the Latino population in the U.S. continues to grow, and if increasing numbers of Latinos and Latinas continue making it into higher education. Currently, most Hispanic Serving Institutions become Hispanic Serving Institutions because they are located in a region where there is substantial growth of Latinos occurring. In order for colleges and universities to serve the needs of the local communities, more Latinos and Latinas are being admitted. This is especially important since many Latinos and Latinas prefer to stay a close to their family while attending college than moving too far

away. So as the population for Latinos in the U.S. continues to grow demographically, institutions in regions where this growth is occurring at its fastest are going to have to make adjustments.

As this dissertation study finds that even though not all Latinos and Latinas experience different racialized spaces in the same way, it still cannot hurt to have all Latinos and Latinas of Mexican origin in institutions that promote not only tolerance for Latino culture overall, but that more importantly allows them to celebrate its as well. Having courses, programs, organizations, cultural events, and even Latino and Latina professors (or professors of any race that are willing to promote positive images of Latinos) are essential to increasing the tolerance and celebration of Latino culture and to help them address the issues that are important to them and their communities. But what will cause such changes in an institution? Especially in institutions that have been predominantly white for so many years? For example PWI in this dissertation study is on the emerging Hispanic Serving Institution list from the federal education department.

HSI80 and HSI40 are models of what may happen to institution in region where there are large Latino populations. For example, HSI80 is able to better serve the interests of their Latino and Latina students by creating a comfortable campus climate due to the fact that Latinos and Latinas have been the majority of students attending that institution for over twenty years. HSI80 started as a predominantly white institution with confederate themes, and slowly over the course of decades saw changes due to the demands for change from the ever increasing Latino and Latina population. HSI40 has not have a majority of Latino and Latina students for that long, but it may be that

perhaps in the next twenty years it may also have changes to reflect changes that happened at HIS80 if the Latino student population continues to increase, which is most likely given regional demographics.

Currently, there are no institutions like Historically Black Colleges or Universities, or Tribal Colleges, for Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. But it seems that institutions like HSI80, while still not completely comparable to such institutions, are making it in that direction where changes in the regional and student population force the institution to change. For Instance consider the following quote by Fernando at PWI about what he thinks needs to happen for changes to better serve Latino and Latina students.

They do have Hispanic studies, and Hispanic department so they do ah, offer like certain courses, and my friends work in the Hispanic department and they do have Hispanic activities going around all the time. So I do see that they have activities, and some Hispanic professors, and Hispanics students attending here. So it's getting there, [but] like it's still pretty much all white, and not as diverse as you would want. *What do you think would need to happen to increase the types of courses and organizations that you and are Latino friends are interested in doing?* Bring more Hispanics! [laughs] probably yeah, that's the only way that it's going to change if you have more Hispanic students that start applying and coming here. And then you know once we have a good number I'm sure things will start growing. Like a whole bunch of organizations will probably start coming up and things like that! (Fernando, 2nd Generation, PWI)

There is power in numbers after all and it is reasonable to think that at least in geographical locations where the population of Latinos continues to increase rapidly, there will be more Latino and Latinas college students in institutions that have historically been predominantly white. However, it will also have to take time, as the longer there is a Latino majority, the more likely institutions will be forced to change

parts of their structure and curriculum to better serve the needs to their Latino and Latina students. It will be those numbers that will cause a tipping point for Latino and Latina students to advocate for further changes in their institutions to better suit their needs. All the changes within these institutions however will probably come from the Latino community up, and not from the institution down.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Past Community Composition

1. Could you tell me a bit about where you grew up?
2. Can you describe to me what your neighborhood looked like growing up?
Do you remember the racial or ethnic makeup of that neighborhood?
How did you feel about the neighborhood?
3. Can you describe to me what your high school looked like?
What was the racial or ethnic composition of this high school?
What was the racial or ethnic composition of the teachers/ staff?
What was the racial or ethnic composition of your friends?
4. Did you attend community college before transferring to this university?
[if answer is “yes” ask] what was the racial or ethnic composition of the
community college?
Can you tell you why you chose to start at a community college?

Ethnic/ Racial Identity Background

5. How would you describe yourself in racial and/or ethnic terms?
Are you using this label as an ethnicity or as a race?
Do you think it’s important to make that distinction between ethnicity and race?
6. I am going to read a list of terms that persons of Mexican origin use to racially or ethnically to identify themselves. Can you tell me what you think about people who use these terms.
 - a. Chicana/o
 - b. Mexican American
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Latino
 - e. *Tejano* (in Texas)
7. Do you speak Spanish? What was your first language?
What language did you speak in the home growing up?
Do you believe that being able to speak Spanish is in an important part of claiming a Latino identity? Why or why not?
8. Do you think “Latino” is a race or an ethnicity? Why?
How do you think white Americans see “Latino” as a race or an ethnicity? Why?

9. As a young adult have you experienced a life change that caused you to re-evaluate the meaning of your identity?
Can you explain this more?
10. Was there a time in which you identified yourself by a different ethnic or racial identity than the current one you gave me?
What was it? Can you explain the context that you used this label?
11. Can you explain why you decided not use that ethnic or racial identity label anymore?
12. Has it ever happened to you that someone has mistaken you for a different race or ethnicity?
Can you explain the situation in which you felt you were being misidentified?
What race or ethnicity did they think you were?
How did this make you feel? How did you respond?
13. Does this misidentification happen often?
If so, is there anything that you do to try to hint to people the racial or ethnic identity you claim?
Have you noticed a pattern in the race or ethnic backgrounds of the person(s) misidentifying you?
14. How would you describe your physical appearance? Are you Mexican/Latino looking, white looking, or Black looking?
Can you explain why you chose that particular one?
15. Next I am going to read to you some quotes from other studies of Latinas and Latinos talking about their identity. Let me know if you can identify with them. If you do not identify with them, does it remind you of anyone you know (a friend, a sibling, a family member?)
- a) I used to identify as Mexican American when I lived at home my mom who was Mexican American. But when I started college I started to hide my background. My friends tell jokes that I knew are offensive to Mexicans. I am embarrassed and don't want them to find out.
 - b) People are always trying to guess where I am from. Some think I am Arab or Native American or even Greek. People just know that I'm not white or Black. I say, "I'm American" because that's how I feel. My parents have their heritage in Mexico but I've never been there or know anyone there, I don't even know Spanish.
 - c) I'm light skinned and my eyes are blue. I identify with being Chicano though. One time I walked into an event that the Chicano studies program was hosting and I could tell people were looking at me like, what are you doing here?

Everyone thinks I'm white until I speak to them in Spanish or I tell them my Spanish sounding name.

- d) I'm not sure how I identify. My family's roots are from Mexico but I never learned Spanish. It's hard to hang out with Latinos because I don't think they see me as legitly Mexican for not knowing Spanish and not being familiar with some of the culture. But I also feel awkward hanging out with whites because they grew up different and always point out how Mexican I am.

Understandings of Racism

16. How would you define racism?

Can you give me an example?

17. How would you define discrimination? Based on race?

Can you give me an example?

18. What are some of the stereotypes whites have about Latinos?

Have you ever had these stereotypes applied to you by students, staff, or faculty at this University?

19. Next I'm going to read to you some quotes from another study of Latina and Latino experiences. Let me know if you can identify with them or had a similar experience. If you do not identify with them, can you think of someone you know that may have experienced this.

- a) I used to get offended at the jokes my friends and other whites would make about Mexicans. I don't look Mexican so they didn't get why I was so offended at a joke. Eventually it got too annoying to explain every time why they were being offensive, and I noticed people would get really annoyed with me. So I stopped.
- b) When I was younger everyone in my family, neighborhood, and school were Hispanic. I knew I was Hispanic too, but I never thought about it. It wasn't till college that I started to feel uncomfortable always being reminded that I was different because the rest of the campus was white. I'm proud to be Hispanic, but I didn't like feeling like I wasn't supposed to be in college.
- c) I went to a club a friend told me about. I could tell the bouncer was letting everyone in if they had an ID and were 21. When it was my turn, the bouncer, a white guy in his 20s ignored my ID and said, "Not tonight." I said, "What do you mean?" He replied, "This place isn't for you, didn't you hear me, wetback?" I was so shocked I didn't know what to say and so angry I just walked off.
- d) I can speak English perfectly, but when I'm with someone who knows Spanish sometimes I prefer to speak in Spanish. One time I was eating lunch with my friend having a personal conversation and this young white woman comes up to us and interrupts us saying, "You need to stop speaking Mexican. This is

America, we speak English here. Go back if you don't like it," and then walked off.

University Experiences

20. Can you tell me the reasons why you chose to attend [university name]?
21. How would you describe the racial composition of the university?
Were you aware of this before attending?
22. How would you describe the atmosphere of this university on a typical day?
How would you describe the culture of university to someone who has never been here before?
23. Are there any places on campus where you feel unwelcomed or unsafe?
Can you explain where that place is and what specifically leads to those feelings?
24. Are there places on campus that make you feel safe and appreciated?
Can you explain where that place is and what specifically leads to those feelings?
25. Do you feel that the University supports you as a Latino [or identity term given in Q5] student?
Why or why not?
26. What is your level of interaction with white people on campus?
Do you get invitations from white people to social events, study groups, or organization events?
27. Do you feel that the University supports its Latino students the same as its white students?
How so or how is it different?
28. I am going to now ask you about a series of experiences, let me know if you have any experience that relates to one or more of these with other students, faculty, or staff: [if answer is, "yes" ask, what did you do to respond to the situation? (if answer is, "did not respond" ask, why or why not?)]
 - a. Has anyone ever blatantly or covertly hinted that they assume you are at this University because of your race or affirmative action and not because of your merit?
 - b. Has anyone ever reacted negatively when they have heard you speaking Spanish on campus?
 - c. Do you feel pressure that there are aspects of your ethnic or racial background that you must give up or conceal to better fit into the university culture?

- d. Has anyone every assumed that you are an immigrant? That you are not a U.S. citizen? Someone who saw you as not “American”?
- e. Has anyone every asked you to speak for all Latinos when there are few Latinos in a classroom?
- f. Has anyone suddenly started treating you differently, acting differently towards you when they realize that they are interacting with a Latino?
- g. Have you witnessed or experienced derogatory language or actions towards immigrants on campus?
- h. Have you witnessed or experienced being called a derogatory name like wetback, mojado, spic? mx
- i. Hearing negative or derogatory misinformation about immigration issues or immigrants?
- j. Been asked “what are you?” or “where are you really from?” did they assume you were not born in the U.S.?

29. Now I’m going to ask you a series of questions about things you may or may not have experienced in dealing with University administration and staff. Tell me your opinion on each one of these.

- a. Are Latinos represented on campus (through the statues, artwork, architecture of some buildings)?
- b. Are Latino celebrations or organizations as visible as other organizations on campus?
- c. In your department how many Latino professors or staff members are there? How does this relate to the rest of the University administrators and staff?
- d. Would you say Latino administrators and/or staff are overrepresented in lower positions?
- e. Are Latinos represented in important student organizations or leadership positions (like the student government?)
- f. Is Latino culture and history represented in the curriculum?

30. Are there things that the school could be doing better to serve Latino students?

31. Do you plan on graduating from this university? What might make it a challenge to fulfilling this task?

32. What makes you stay? Is there anything that makes has made you consider leaving?

33. Would you recommend this school to another Latino student similar to you? What advice would you give this Latina/o about attending this university?

34. Is there anything about you being a [Latino man] [Latina woman] makes attending college particularly difficult or different?

University Experiences and Identity

35. Do you feel less or more or about the same [x] when you are at this university versus when you go back home? Why is that so or not so?
36. Did you feel less or more or about the same [x] before coming to this university?
Why is this so?
37. Do your friends or family back home feel that you have changed your racial or ethnic identity orientation since starting at this University?
Has this created conflicts? Or has this strengthened your relationships with them?
38. Talk a little bit about your closest friends?
Are they in this same University?
What is their racial or ethnic backgrounds?
39. Is it important to you to date people of your same racial or ethnic identification?
How does the campus composition make this a challenge or facilitate achieving this?
40. Has coming to an [PWI/ HSI] helped shape your racial or ethnic identity? Do you think it would have been different in a [HSI/ PWI] environment? Why or why not?

Basic Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your major and minor?
3. What year are you in now?
4. How would you describe yourself as working class, middle class, or upper class?
How about your family of origin?
What is your family's income currently?
 - a) Less than \$10,000
 - b) \$10-19,999
 - c) \$20-29,999
 - d) \$30-39,999
 - e) \$40-49,999
 - f) \$50-74,999
 - g) \$75-99,999
 - h) \$100,000-149,999
 - i) \$150,000 or more
5. What is the highest education level of your mother?
What does she do for a living?

6. What is highest education level of your father?
What does he do for a living?
7. Where are your parents from? Where were they born?
8. Do you have any siblings? How many?
How old are they?