A CASE STUDY OF LATINO/A LEARNERS' SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN A SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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A CASE STUDY OF LATINO/A LEARNERS' SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN A SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Abstract: This qualitative case study explores seven multilingual Latino/a students' experiences of school-based learning in a suburban public school. The purpose of this study is to understand their learning resources and needs as well as examine the role race plays. Data collection includes classroom observations, two semi-structured individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a writing or drawing prompt. Using hermeneutic inquiry and a Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) framework, two readings are presented for each, individual participant, and then a cross-case analysis in the form of organized themes is presented. The first reading is interpretive and is meant to convey the participants' experiential accounts. The second reading is critical and sought embedded influences that were not readily apparent (Woodbrooks, 1991). The application of LatCrit also offers counterstories to contribute to the centrality of the experiences of Latino/a students. Interpretations of the data provide insights into the participants' lived experiences, suggesting that school was a contested space in which interplay between the contextual constraints of schooling and human agency occurred. Race served to empower participants to enact agency and at other times race plays a role by constraining participants. Their school-based learning experiences were met with a continual negotiation of identity expression.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I believe that it should be possible to move into a new world without completely giving up the old. –Valdes, 1996, p. 205

We are challenged every day to listen, to share our passions, and to open our eyes to who our students are, what they bring to the table, and what they need from us next.
–Barbieri, 2002, p. 178

As I reflect on my experiences as a teacher working with Latino/a students over the past several years, I remain contemplative over the challenges these students and their families often face, especially within the context of U.S. public schools. For example, the history surrounding the racial status of the Latino/a population falls short of those presented for some other cultures in American history thus representing a shadow over Latino/a culture that exists within the literature. The social status of the Latino/a population is extremely complex. In fact, Donato and Hanson (2012) note that, "they were categorized as 'White' by the federal government in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, a label that became a double-edged sword for Mexican Americans for more than a century" (p. 205). This means that Latinos/as were historically considered white on paper while being treated non-white in the context of society, as represented in school much of the time. I can't help but wonder how issues of social and racial status of

Latino/a students are played out in schools today. A more recent example of "status" that deserves question lies within the fact that a majority of the Latino/a students are labeled as Special Education (SPED) students at the school where I currently teach, which I find troubling to say the least. I am left to wonder what kind of struggles or tensions Latino/a students experience in schools today and how schools might increase awareness of Latino/a student experiences while addressing the learning needs of such students.

As multiple studies recognize, the demographics of U.S. public schools are changing (Dixon, et al., 2012; Isik-Ercan, 2010; Kaplan & Leckie, 2009; Many, Dewberry, Taylor & Coady, 2009). Brinegar (2010) further asserts that the student population is diversifying more than what is being acknowledged in schools, therefore resulting in a need to consider pedagogy and school organization through a multicultural perspective. A multicultural perspective, as used here, means learning how to think in more inclusive and expansive ways. Multicultural educator Sonia Nieto (1992) believes that all good education takes students seriously and uses their experiences as a basis for further learning (p. 304). Based on the changing demographics, and to some extent the lack of recognition they receive, a need remains to expand research including the school experiences of Latino/a students. Doing so allows for a unique and possibly uncommon perspective to emerge which serves to better inform pedagogical decision-making and its implications for the learning needs of Latino/a students. The saturated documentation of U.S. public school demographics, or the lack thereof, in combination with my own experiences serving Latino/a students in the classroom both serve as a renewed invitation to re-story the schooling experiences of Latino/a children in U.S. public schools and remain as the focus for this study. Much like Valdes (1996) in a quote from her ethnographic portrait of culturally diverse families and schools, I believe that schooling can do more to nurture the blending of the diverse cultural and language backgrounds students bring to school; however, the resources intended to support the diversity of students are often limited in school districts. For example, students who are considered English Language Learners (ELL), meaning that they do not primarily speak English at home, often spend most of their school day in a mainstream classroom absent of necessary resources, placing a sense of isolation and tension on both the student and teacher. In one article based on two qualitative studies on immigrants and schooling, Olsen (2000) finds that immigrant students remain torn between two languages and two worlds. I think that similar challenges specific to U.S. born Latino/a students from immigrant families also exist. As I gain confidence approaching my work with Latino/a students and families and as I become more empathetic to their schooling needs, I remain driven to better understand the unique schooling experiences Latino/a students face in U.S. public schools.

Turning to existing literature, the focus of studies related to students from other cultures and languages in U.S. public schools often falls under the realm of policy or school reform, identity formation, or the debate over English-only laws (Donato & Hanson, 2012; Haskins & Tienda, 2011; Kaplan & Leckie, 2009; Viruell-Fuentes, 2011). Although such studies contribute to the collective knowledge surrounding these students and families and the issues they face, more research on the schooling experiences specific to Latino/a students is needed within a framework that places the students' voices as the prominent focus. My interest is specific to Latino/a students' schooling experiences because of my own experiences teaching these students, along with historically racial discriminatory practices that Latinos/as have faced in U.S. public schools (Garcia, Yosso, & Barajas, 2012). Therefore, it is my hope to place Latino/a students' voices at the forefront in exploring their schooling experiences in order to discover more of what they need from U.S. public schools.

Before moving on, I discuss my stance and rationale for the specific terminology and labeling of Latino/a students that I utilized throughout this study. First, there is no real consensus on what term is considered "politically correct" for describing people who speak Spanish and whose families originate from Spanish or Latin countries. Generally, the term "Latino" refers to countries that were once under Roman rule, and the term "Hispanic" generally refers to countries that were once under Spanish rule. Neither term defines a racial category, but they do refer more to matters of cultural identity. I used the term Latino/a because it matches the terminology of my chosen framework, Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) and because my search within the literature revealed that this term is more inclusive overall. That said it is always best to ask particular individuals what cultural identity they prefer to associate with. Participants did in fact identify with multiple cultural identities, such as Mexican-American for example. As a result, I intended to remain sensitive to my participants' preferred cultural identities, and honored their preferences.

Finally, I discuss my stance on U.S. public schools' labeling of students who speak another language more fluently than English. To accomplish this, I adopt the rationale that Davis, Mitchell, Dray, and Keenan (2012) utilize in their case study of a successful urban high school for multilingual Latino students. The stance is as follows:

> We use the term "multilingual learners" to refer to those students whose daily lived reality involves the use and navigation of multiple languages. While the literature and schools generally refer to this population as "English Language Learners" (ELL) or "Limited English Proficient," (LEP) we choose to use the aforementioned term to refer to multilingual learners at all levels of English proficiency in an effort to shift the focus on this population from English deficiency to an asset based perspective centered on multilingual abilities. (Davis, Mitchell, Dray, & Keenan, 2012, pp. 61-62)

This stance matches my own professional views in the teaching of multilingual Latino/a students in that I also view their language abilities as an asset rather than a deficit. I discuss the cultural deficit view in greater detail as part of my literature review. Middle school and high school students in the Midwestern state where this study took place are required to take foreign language courses. This means that students who speak another language more fluently than English are not only required to learn English upon entering the public school system, but they are also required to take a foreign language course such as Chinese. Many Latino/a students navigate through multiple languages daily, hence the term multilingual. Furthermore, because these students have acquired various levels of English proficiency from no English speaking skills to fluent English speaking skills, I adopt the stance and use of the term multilingual learners.

Research Problem

As an experienced teacher, I find that the diversity of languages and cultures in the classroom remains a source of tension for many teachers. Studies have been conducted which confirm the difficulty teachers face incorporating multicultural education into the classroom while not knowing exactly how to move forward in learning about the diverse cultures their students bring to the classroom (Cartledge, Gardner, & Ford, 2009; Robinson & Clardy, 2011). This "site of tension" that many teachers experience in managing diversity in the classroom often results in a cultural deficit view, particularly in the views of multilingual Latino/a students.

The cultural deficit view frames inadequacies on the students and families, which overlooks the deeper and broader societal issues of inequalities. As I mentioned in the introduction, the school that I teach in contains a disproportionate number of multilingual Latino/a students who receive Special Education services (SPED) as compared to the multilingual students of other cultures such as Arabic or Korean native speakers, for example. One study considers the role of bilingual education teachers in preventing inappropriate referrals of multilingual students to Special Education, clarifying that teachers are often unable to distinguish whether students' academic problems result from limited English proficiency or from learning disabilities (Ortiz et al., 2011). Furthermore, in their critical review of the overrepresentation of multilingual students, including Latinos/as in SPED, Artiles and Trent (1994) recognize the need to "reexamine the overrepresentation issue from a broader perspective in order to better understand how and why it has stubbornly persisted" (p. 410). This leaves one to question the best ways to support multilingual Latino/a students learning needs.

Research and teacher professional development have attempted to address these issues in the past with limited exploration of classroom experiences through the narratives of the students themselves, particularly through the narratives of multilingual Latino/a students. First, I found that studies involving discussions around race or immigrant students and schooling are mostly that of teacher, parent, or other adult narratives (Abramova, 2013; Isik-Ercan, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Olmedo, 2009; Pollack, 2012; Souto-Manning, 2007; Urrieta, 2007; Valdes, 1996). Furthermore, the studies that do in fact include student narratives or explore classroom experiences are often framed as ethnographic studies, and the cultural identity of the participants is widely varied (Brinegar, 2010; Gildersleeve, 2010; Habashi, 2010; Heath, 1983; Toohey, 2000), leaving few studies that focus primarily on the perspectives of multilingual Latino/a students and their schooling experiences. My study used case study methodology that centers around the individual student as the case and places the focus on the individual within a particular cultural context. This is different from ethnographic studies, where the emphasis is placed on cultural patterns.

Furthermore, the LatCrit framework has not yet been widely adopted in education. My study contributes to the development of LatCrit in the field of education, a necessary addition for the progress of the field. Barillas-Chon (2010) criticizes existing research for homogenizing Mexican immigrants as communities who come from a dominant part of Mexico, and he further argues that research neglects to document Mexican immigrants from other communities. Upon my search of the existing literature, I considered how current research homogenizes Latino/a students who were born in and attended school in their native countries before coming to the U.S. with the Latino/a students who are U.S. born and have only attended U.S. public schools. My study aimed to find multilingual Latino/a student participants who are U.S. born and have only experienced schooling in the U.S., thus filling the gap of the unique experiences of students who are often homogenized into one ethnic category.

Although this may limit the scope of participant selection, a recent occurrence supports the need to examine this discrepancy more closely. The English Language Development (ELD) department where I work and which I am part of was recently asked to identify and refer ELL students for a Summer school program aimed for improving language. One of the students that we referred happens to be a U.S. born, multilingual Latina student. We were informed that this student did not “qualify” because of her U.S. born status, and the funding was designed for “immigrant” students only, a fact which was unknown to us beforehand. In chapter two, the literature review, I discuss some racial issues that Latinos/as historically encounter in the U.S. with mention of contradictory status. For now, let this serve as a modern day example of the contradictory status that works both for, and against, Latino/a students in the U.S. Furthermore, situations such as this beg for a closer examination of a system that mistakenly labels students as incapable or excludes them from necessary resources they need to succeed in school.

Despite various research interests regarding multilingual Latino/a students in U.S. public schools, the collection of and contribution of student narratives of school life is limited. A possible reason for the lack of studies focused on multilingual Latino/a student's school narratives may be due to the lack of reflections on the adult's role, and implications on restricting children voices, as Habashi (2010) suggests in her chapter on the paradoxes of doing research with children. As a result, this study addressed the call for more research on the lived experiences of multilingual Latino/a students attending public school in the Midwest.

My study utilized a combination of theoretical lenses, and contributes to scholarly work that seeks to create equality education and an engaging curriculum for all students. The combination of LatCrit and interpretivism as theoretical frameworks in a study on multilingual Latino/a students' school experiences is rare. Although both frameworks have been used individually in studies that examine Latinos/as school experiences, my study is unique because of this combination. Erica Davila and Ann Aviles de Bradley's (2010) study on Latino/a students in Chicago Public Schools is a good example of the use of a CRT and LatCrit framework to uncover the struggles and the injustices Latinos/as often face. Although the study is rooted within the concerns of the community, it lacks an aspect that seeks deeper meaning by way of interpreting the very experiences of Latino/a students themselves. Therefore, a study that blends interpretivism with LatCrit allows interplay between the two frameworks, leaving room to explore the conceptual world of participants while also questioning the internalized assumptions "inherent in the constructed realities of both the researcher and researched" (Woodbrooks, 1991, p. 101). Furthermore, Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) maintain that, "all qualitative research emerges from a perceived problem, some unsatisfactory situation, condition, or phenomenon that we want to confront" (p. 34). Perhaps a study that attempts to understand school-based learning experiences through the narratives of multilingual Latino/a students will inform educational efforts to meet the learning needs of multilingual Latino/a learners in U.S. public schools.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of multilingual Latino/a students, ages eleven to fourteen, who attend public school in the Midwest, to understand their learning resources and needs as well as examine the possible role race plays. I hoped to create portraits of multilingual Latino/a students as they negotiate their way through school in an attempt to better understand how their unique learning needs may be met. This research also provides educators with a better understanding of how multilingual Latino/a students view learning in school. I also offered a critical examination of the role race plays in their learning and schooling experiences. This will enhance our understanding of their learning needs as well as our understanding of the cultural backgrounds multilingual Latino/a students bring with them to their learning environment as resources.

Research Questions

The main research question that guided my research was: How do multilingual Latino/a students age eleven to fourteen experience school-based learning in a public suburban school located in the Midwest? In addition three sub-questions were used to guide my research:

- How do multilingual Latino/a students' stories reveal what learning resources they bring to school?
- What learning needs of multilingual Latino/a students should schools pay attention to?
- In what ways, if any, does race play a role in the schooling experiences of multilingual Latino/a students?

Theoretical Framework

This study explored multilingual Latino/a students' experiences of school-based learning in public schools, located in the Midwestern part of the U.S. Qualitative in nature, this study utilized a combination of interpretivism and Latino/a Critical Theory (LatCrit) as its theoretical lens. First, I discuss interpretivism. According to Merriam (2002), "learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered an *interpretive* qualitative approach" (p. 4). The interpretivist approach directly contrasts with positivism that distances individuals from the world of their everyday experiences. I situated this study in an interpretivist framework because I wanted to better understand the unique and individual nature of multilingual Latino/a learners' school-based experiences through the telling of their own stories. Furthermore, an interpretivist approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world (Crotty, 1998, p. 67) that focuses on those aspects that are unique and individual. Borrowing from Creswell (2003), "the goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 8). My attempt at documenting, interpreting, and sharing the views of my participants therefore remained focused on understanding participants' views and their own constructions of reality as the first layer of analysis.

Second, I discuss Latino/a Critical Theory (LatCrit). Central to Critical Race Theory, from which LatCrit originates, is the belief that personal narratives and stories represent valid forms of evidence in the documentation of inequities equivalent to that of the numbers-only approach of quantitative research. LatCrit's focus is specific to the inequities Latinos/as face in the U.S., as it assumes that a bias exists against Latino/a students in schools and seeks to know more about the issues Latino/a students face within the context of schooling. Therefore, I am hopeful that my study offers a more complete representation of Latino/a students' experiences by placing their perspectives at the forefront while offering an examination of the possible inequities that exist and the need to address them. This is important to educational research because it centralizes the perspectives of the students themselves, adding to the importance of experiential accounts regarding their every day lives. It furthermore offers a critical understanding of these stories in the pursuit for social justice. As proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), strategies of inquiry connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials. Next, I continue to discuss the interplay of the two frameworks, interpretivism and LatCrit.

As Lather (2004) suggests in her discussion of the methodological assumptions of critical inquiry, “the central issue is how to bring scholarship and advocacy together in order to generate ways of knowing that interrupt power imbalances” (p. 208). By pairing interpretivism with LatCrit, this study provided an empirical site embracing both openness to counterstories as well as critical interpretation of race, language, and power imbalances as they are played out in the context of school. The interpretive part of this study acknowledged the participants’ construction of reality, which is made meaningful by their unique perspectives and located within a particular context and time, while the critical paradigm moves beyond the descriptive level of interpretation, emphasizing an emancipatory interest (Woodbrooks, 1991, p. 100-101). Interpretivism is appropriate for this study because it allowed me to respect the participants’ constructions of reality and illuminate such untold or unheard voices. LatCrit, a complimentary theoretical lens for this study, is critical in order to challenge the dominant discourse of race and language as it is played out in the participants’ views of school-based learning, allowing for any necessary changes to take place.

With the frameworks of interpretivism and LatCrit in mind, case study methods are discussed next. As I discuss the methodology, I continue to situate my study within the two frameworks. In the section on researcher subjectivity, I will then discuss the tensions that exist between the two frameworks in more detail. I think using both lenses are beneficial for this study in not only understanding what is going on in the student’s life at school but also in challenging social structure of inequality at the intersection of race, language, and other social factors.

Methodology

This study intended to illuminate the perspectives of multilingual Latino/a students as they experience school while challenging taken for granted assumptions through a critical lens. Case study methods were used, and qualitative case study methodology helped to provide me with a more holistic description and analysis of a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). In other words, it aims to gain in-depth understanding. For this study, I wanted to gain in-depth understandings of multilingual Latino/a students' learning needs, the learning resources they bring with them to school, and I wanted to examine if and how race plays a role. In my study, the individual students were the case. Merriam (1998) supports the potential impact case studies have in the field of education by pointing out that "educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice" (p. 32). Case study is a good fit for my study because of its focus in reflecting on human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) of a single unit and a single point in time, which provides us with a broader understanding of the unique challenges of multilingual Latino/a students attending public school in the U.S.

Although a more thorough discussion of the research design, including the theoretical framework and methodology, is provided in chapter three, I briefly discuss the sampling and participants as well as the data collection and data analysis methods next. This study took place in a suburban location in the Midwest where I obtained all required permissions from the IRB and the school district. I sent an email to site principals introducing myself and my study, asking if they had the appropriate student population for my study and if they would be willing to allow me to include their school site and students in my study. I sought out student participants who were U.S. born, Latino/a students, ages eleven to fourteen, who are multilingual Spanish and English speakers and who have been identified as ELL by the school. I chose this age range because they will have multiple years of schooling experiences to base their experiences on and because of my own familiarity with teaching this age group. I inquired about specific teachers whom I contacted in order to provide me with a potential participant pool. My goal was to find four to eight participants with a balanced mix of both male and female students.

Data collection for each participant in this qualitative case study included two observations, two semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview, and either a writing prompt or a drawing prompt focusing on a particular good or bad day at school; I also kept a research journal. Qualitative research often includes the use of interviews and observations; however, I felt that a writing or drawing prompt served as a complementary source of data because it is often a familiar form of expression for young participants. Also, because spoken language posed a barrier during the data collection, this allowed participants to express themselves through drawings or writings while helping them communicate their views more readily. In an article that focused on creative methods used in qualitative research, Deacon (2000) finds that the use of methods such as drawings or writing prompts makes research more engaging and places high value on the stories of research participants. Furthermore, Greene and Hill (2005) state that, "we both subscribe to the view that the understanding of children, their lives and their development requires a multiplicity of methodological approaches" (p. 4). By using multiple data sources, which included writing and drawing prompts, the methods of my study attempted to address the concern of obtaining information from children in developmentally appropriate ways, thus seeking a more authentic and transparent set of data. The multiple data sources enhanced the overall quality of the study and provided trustworthiness. The data collection for this study took place during one academic semester in the Fall of 2014.

Data analysis for this study included the transcribing of all interviews, the coding of data into relevant themes, and analyzing data from a critical lens. Similar to the method of analysis in Woodbrooks' (1991) feminist poststructural study in which the author uses three layers of analysis-interpretive, critical, and deconstructive, two layers of data analysis occurred in my study. The first layer included an interpretation of the students' own stories, and it included an open coding process into themes. The second layer of data analysis involved a critical approach, focusing on the issue of race. Woodbrooks (1991) eloquently recognizes the importance of moving beyond the interpretive approach to inquiry by introducing a critical paradigm that "seeks to expose the source of the participants' worldview, that may be unknown to them as well as the researcher" (p. 101). My study followed the method of juxtaposition by pairing the paradigms of interpretivism and LatCrit. Finally, the study was written in a format that illuminates the perspectives of multilingual Latino/a student participants, but at the same time a second "critical tale" was written into the findings.

Researcher Subjectivity

Merriam (2002) poses the importance of identifying and monitoring biases throughout the research process in order to reflect on how they may shape the collection and interpretation of the data (p. 5). As I gathered, interpreted, and presented my research, I constantly remained reflexive of any unintended influences that affected this process. Rajendran (2001) reminds us that the human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis. Therefore, to better understand how this mostly "White" female teacher's interest in multilingual Latino/a students has developed, I begin by sharing my own, personal experiences with the perceived and socially constructed "racial commonsense" relevant in much of U.S. society.

Omi and Winant (1994) refer to the term, racial commonsense, as the type of thinking that leads people to automatically preclude someone else's race or ethnicity simply by looking at them. As a child growing up with divorced parents, I lived in New Mexico during my elementary school years, while visiting Oklahoma during the Summer months. I spent the school years constantly trying to make sense of the multicultural landscape of my new community, which was made up of mostly Hispanic and Native American ethnicities. I was often cast as a *gringa* and was never completely accepted into the native community of my friends, even though I learned to speak and act like them. On the other hand, as I visited Oklahoma during the Summers, where I would eventually attend middle school and high school, I was faced with a constant re-negotiation of relationships, only this time with my "White" peers. Here, I was constantly confronted with the question, "what are you?" I suppose my olive complexion, dark brown hair and eyes, and my New Mexican accent encouraged their assumptions that I didn't look or sound like I was from there. Today, I am left to ponder those childhood experiences of not being White enough for one community and not being dark enough for another. Furthermore, it seemed that the adults around me, whether parents or teachers, didn't pay much attention to the social dynamics I was experiencing, and I wonder if they were even aware of it. I believe these experiences have helped to shape the reason I became a teacher along with my belief in something that should be included as part of our educational mission: "to educate students about the flaws and limitations of essentialized cultural portrayals of socially constructed groups" (Garcia, 2013, p. 238).

Currently, I am an English Language Development (ELD) teacher at one of the intermediate schools within the suburban district for which this study took place. I am lucky enough to have the opportunity to engage and interact with students from all over the world. Although a language barrier often exists, it is exciting and fun to discover creative ways for my students and me to learn about one another. Preceding my role as an ELD teacher, I taught fifth grade in an urban setting where the reality of classroom diversity blindsided me. The teacher education program for which I had been trained did not prepare me for such a setting. My required hours of classroom observation and student teaching took place in mostly White, middle-class settings, leaving me with a false sense of reality. Fortunately, my students, who were primarily Mexican, filled my learning gap by teaching me beyond what I could have ever learned in college. I will remain forever grateful for the lessons they taught me.

For example, one day we discussed careers in class, and I asked a couple of students what they would like to be when they grew up. A sweet, female, straight-A student shrugged her shoulders as if she had never really thought about it and said she would like to work as a hotel maid, just like her mother. At the time I was taken aback, but in reflection I realize that my question as well as my personal reaction was consumed in the "White, middle-class" perspective. Attempting to remove the White, middle-class lens allows me to value the cultural resources that others have while learning from them. Many of my students' families spent time together outside of school in a community where individuals supported one another by helping raise each other's children, cooking and sharing meals with each other, or transporting each other to work/school/errands. Many times, a student would be absent because he or she had to stay home to care for a younger sibling or cousin because a caregiver was working. My students displayed both parenting and teaching characteristics with younger children, and I always enjoyed observing them in this role, whether we paired up with a kindergarten class for reading buddies or whether I brought my own one and a half year old son to visit. They reminded me of the importance of community and of caring for one another and that school can represent something more meaningful than college and career preparedness.

I am hopeful that my childhood experiences of otherness and that my passion for educating towards a more just-society will serve my work as a researcher whose goal is to share the stories of those who are often not heard in order to critically examine the role of race. Throughout this process, I remained reflexive. I did not assume that my participants constructed the same meaning out of their experiences as I did. I remained open to their responses and the meanings they made of them. Cuero (2009) cautions us against the authoring of students from marginalized groups, warning that it may lead us to a more narrowed view of them. For example, my participants might have challenged LatCrit assumptions or did not view their cultural difference as a problem to deal with. Therefore, I remained aware that my participants might challenge my own beliefs and assumptions, and allowed any difference to be revealed. This is a distinction unique to the interpretivist paradigm which is the reason it served as an appropriate fit for this study. The interpretivist framework allowed for the openness of participants to construct their own meanings, and although the researcher is, essentially, reinterpreting those meanings it recognized that construction of meaning was unique to that individual.

Tensions exist, however, between interpretivism and LatCrit. The role of LatCrit is to challenge racism and other forms of social oppression and the assumptions of the participants' constructed views of reality when they internalize the message of social injustice. Although a critical paradigm recognizes the importance of an individual's unique perspective it is not fully accepted as such. In other words, interpretive inquiry seeks to understand while critical inquiry seeks to and bring attention to how structural and internalized racism plays out in the context of school. As Woodbrooks (1991) points out, it is the interplay of paradigms that warrants more attention in order to move towards a consciousness for social justice (p. 101). Situating this study within two potentially conflicting theoretical perspectives provoked a better understanding of who and/or what has influenced the participants' experiences and the meanings they make of them. As the researcher, I was simultaneously drawn to both frameworks for this study. I chose to use both interpretivism and LatCrit as complementary lenses in an attempt to unearth the unique stories of my participants as well as critically examine certain societal structures. I feel that the stories of my participants are worth sharing and may show important insight into their learning environment. Furthermore, my educator conscience believes in working towards a more just society. The use of a critical lens aided in my attempt to question culturally ingrained assumptions. It is for these reasons that I chose to use both complementary lenses.

Significance of Study

The design for this study grew out of my general concern for multilingual Latino/a students in U.S. public schools and the inequalities they face within the school context. As a passionate teacher, I have an innate desire to improve programs designed for language learning as well as a desire to improve the overall schooling experiences for such students. The primary driving force for conducting this study was, however, to illuminate the stories and perspectives that are often not included in the dominant discourse- those of multilingual Latino/a students in Midwestern public schools while also critically examining the role of race.

The use of LatCrit, a branch originating out of Critical Race Theory (CRT), is significant to researchers interested in the intersectionality of race, culture, language, and schooling. A LatCrit framework paired with qualitative, case study methods sheds a light on multilingual Latino/a students' experiences of school-based learning, which may challenge the educational assumptions born out of racial dichotomy in the U.S. that we take for granted. Building on the critical race counter-storytelling of other scholars interested in problematizing traditional notions of race within U.S. public schools (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2006), this study offered a critical reflection on the lived experiences of multilingual Latino/a students at a public school in the Midwestern part of the U.S. This study will enhance awareness of educational issues for marginalized groups, such as multilingual Latino/a students, particularly at the intersection of multiple factors such as language, race, and ethnicity.

Another significance of this study lies in the challenge posed by Fernandez's (2002) work in documenting Latino/a education and resistance, which prompts us to "consider the lives of Latino/a students more seriously and to question what bearing the quality of their education actually has on their life chances" (p. 60). In other words, this study improves the practical applications for teachers and administrators whose schools encompass a multilingual Latino/a student population as well as inform policy on language learning in public schools.

Definition of Terms

ELD teacher- refers to English Language Development teachers who are hired to work specifically with ELL students.

ELL/ESL- English Language Learner or English as a Second Language
is a label given to students whose first language is other than English.

English language proficiency levels- refers to the language proficiency levels given to ELL students depending on how little or proficiently they speak English. Labels include: Newcomer (NEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP), Fluent English Speaking (FES), Fluent English Proficient (FEP).

First and Second Year Monitor Status- refers to labeled ELL students who have tested English proficient but are closely monitored for two consecutive years.

Immigrant- refers to a person who has come from another country to live in the U.S. permanently.

Intermediate school- a public school housing only the fifth and sixth grades.

Latino- refers to self-identified, ethnic student population. In the U.S., the term is often used synonymously with the term "Hispanic" to identify groups of people of Spanish-speaking origin or Latin America.

Mainstream classroom- refers to the standard school classroom.

Multilingual learner- refers to students who navigate learning through more than two languages.

School-based learning- refers to learning in the school context.

SPED- Special Education is a program designed for students with special learning or developmental needs.

White- refers to the Caucasian population.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter examines how the existing literature addresses the complexities of Latino/a student's schooling experiences in U.S. public schools. I begin the chapter with a brief overview of historically relevant incidents Latinos/as and other Spanish speaking ethnic groups have faced in U.S. public schools. I choose to begin this literature review with a discussion of such historical accounts in order to illuminate our understanding of the contradictory expectations Americanization has placed on this marginalized group of society. A discussion of these historical accounts also illustrates the realization that American history is in and of itself a dominant discourse. Following a brief discussion of the history, I examine how scholars theorize about the cultural deficit model that is prevalent in institutions, such as schools. My understanding of the cultural deficit model is based on how it has been advanced to explain school failure among economically disadvantaged ethnic minority students (Valencia, 1997). I will include a discussion on immigrant generational status in relation to cultural and structural barriers, and then I will specifically tend to second-generation immigrant success. Finally, I will review studies that have utilized student narratives of various schooling issues to localize such perspectives as a useful and valuable tool to advance pedagogy. This literature review serves as a critical look at existing work that is significant for carrying out my study. It is also important for me to point out that I will use various terms, such as Latino/a, Hispanic, Mexican, and/or Chicano/a, synonymously to refer to the marginalized, Spanish speaking ethnic groups in the U.S. due to the diverse use of the term in the literature.

A Brief History of Latino/a Racial Issues in the United States

The history of the schooling experiences specific to that of Latinos/as and other Spanish speaking groups in the U.S. remains mostly untold in the dominant discourse of American history. What limited attention has been given to such experiences is often approached with a simplistic framework that fails to reveal a promising dimensionality. In other words, racial discrimination in the U.S. has generally been understood in a Black/White dichotomy (Galindo, 2011), obscuring the unique history of Latinos/as. Therefore, the history surrounding the racial status of the Latino/a and other Spanish-speaking populations falls short of those presented for some other ethnic groups. More specifically, the social status of Latinos/as is, and has historically been, extremely complex. In order to notably situate the foreground for this study, it is important to reexamine the literature of some of the most basic historical accounts of schooling challenges, specifically racial segregation, in order to reveal a new focus on previously unacknowledged issues within those events that have been justly acknowledged. Furthermore, in rereading the historical accounts of school desegregation with the Latino/a population, the complexity of their status and identity in America becomes clearer.

Latinos/as have a long history of resistance to school segregation in the U.S., yet the American public remains generally unfamiliar with this history. I would argue that most people tend to think of the landmark case Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 when they think of school desegregation; however, one of the earliest school desegregation cases in U.S. history was the Lemon Grove Incident of 1930. The Lemon Grove Incident of 1930 adds to the significance surrounding school segregation, desegregation, and integration of Latinos/as because it occurred twenty-three years prior to the landmark case of Brown vs. Board of Education, which often overshadows the collective history of racial issues in the United States. The Lemon Grove incident began when the Lemon Grove, CA Board of Education decided to build a separate school for children of Mexican heritage, but this decision did not include any input or feedback from the parents of these children. In fact, the parents were not made aware of the Board's plan at all. Alvarez (1986) describes the Lemon Grove school community leading up to the case,

> Their unity and perseverance were tested as never before during the early part of 1931. Most of these families had been in Lemon Grove for a number of years and had offspring who were first generation American citizens by birth. Seventy-five of these children attended the Lemon Grove Grammar School where a total of 169 students were enrolled. (p. 7)

The case went to court and the judge ruled in the Mexican students' favor, allowing them to return to their original school alongside other children in the Lemon Grove community. Often times the history of Latinos/as is situated within the literature surrounding the legal status and citizenship of people in the United States. The social status of such Spanish speaking ethnic groups is extremely complex. Similar to the example pointed out previously, Mexican Americans were historically considered White on paper while being treated as non-White in the context of society, such as school in many cases. Even within the Lemon Grove court case, the social status appears blurred.

Contradictions in the social status of Latinos/as in the U.S. deserve a critical examination. For example, the Lemon Grove community chose a specific Mexican American child to represent all of the segregated children in the court case. The specific child was chosen "because he was an exemplary student and spoke English well" (Alvarez, 1986, p. 3). This is a primary example of the contradictory status and "double-edged sword" often experienced by Spanish speaking ethnic groups. In one way, the child was recognized by the community for his White characteristics- a good student who spoke English well; however, the child was selected to defend the Mexican heritage of the other Mexican American children in the Lemon Grove school. Further examples of the complicated classification of such ethnic groups lies within the work of other scholars. Ironically, some Mexican Americans claim that their White status was used to prove a claim of racial discrimination as unviable since they were legally White (Gross, 2007; Haney Lopez, 1997). The contradictions of the legal and social status of Latinos/as further add to the lens that forced segregation within schools such as Lemon Grove is based on the societal views of race and not the legal ("on-paper") definitions of race.

Throughout the recorded histories of the segregation, desegregation, and integration of these marginalized children in schools, the term Americanization often comes up. Many "White" school boards and leaders used the term Americanization, which framed the idea that creating separate schools for Latino/a children would help them to catch up with their White peers. Fortunately, scholars who have researched these issues have successfully included this component in the literature, framing the term Americanization as an assimilation into American society and therefore negatively impacting Latino/a families; however, racial issues involving the Latino/a population, historically speaking, continue to be overshadowed by more prominent accounts of racial segregation issues. In a study focused on Mexican children, Garcia, Yosso, and Barajas (2012) take into account the rationale behind racial segregation specific throughout California, stating that, "rationales for segregating Mexican students often focused on correcting supposed problems of language and culture, with curricula emphasizing learning English and becoming 'American'" (p. 11). In analyzing the existing literature, the framing of mundane racism, which Latino/a children and their families experienced, becomes more and more obvious.

In accounts dating back to the year 1900, Whites framed Americanization as a positive way to educate Mexican children. Curriculum focused on teaching English, practicing healthy personal hygiene, and providing more individualized academic attention. A more recent example occurred in 1978 when Congress amended the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 to emphasize the goal of competence in the English language and to restrict support of *transitional* programs only. These *transitional* programs allowed more ease in acquiring the English language because the goal of learning the English language was not the only focus. In addition, English-only initiatives attempted to positively frame the Americanization of English language learners in schools while attempting to show benefit. Interestingly, the parents of Mexican children in 1900 weren't necessarily told about the segregation of their children into Americanization classrooms or schools, whereas in more recent years, parents of English language learners have been successfully deceived. For example, English only initiatives strategically promote their political agenda by utilizing a common rhetorical phrase, “for the children” in order to manipulate feelings of the voting public and to appeal to the Latino/a community. Moving beyond recent accounts and returning to the context of Lemon Grove in the 1930’s, Alvarez (1986) recaptures the rationale of the Lemon Grove Board of Education stating that,

> The school board’s action was rationalized under the pretentions for the betterment of the Mexican children’s education. The new school was to be an “Americanization school” in which the deficiencies of the children of Mexican descent could be covered, avoiding the deterioration of American students as a result of contact with Mexicans in the main school. (p. 4)

By reexamining the literature, we are taken back to the most basic historical accounts of racial segregation, revealing a new focus. In this case the historical accounts of the segregation of Latino/a and other Spanish speaking ethnic groups reveal the presence of racial hierarchy, placing Whites in the highest status. A final point worth mentioning involves the Americanization and assimilation expectations in the U.S. Although I have not included much of the abundantly available literature surrounding this topic because of the topic of my study, one scholar makes a critical point regarding the assimilation of Latinos/as in the U.S. In his book, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse*, scholar Otto Santa Ana (2002) explores the public image of Latinos/as during the 1990s. He states,

> …it was assumed that Latinos would assimilate as white European immigrants did at the turn of the century… Assimilation did not work since Latinos did not come to the US from a distant land; in many ways they never left their homeland (Santa Ana, 2002, p. 4).

This connects to Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) stance on the assimilation process which contains too many contingencies and variables to be uniform and straightforward. By applying the point Santa Ana (2002) makes on assimilation to the historical accounts of the segregation/desegregation of Latinos/as, we gain a better understanding of the Latino/a perspective and further build our understanding of the historically and currently complex social status of Latinos/as in the U.S.

Media influence and other forms of public discourse shape the perceptions of Latinos/as in the U.S., and in the context of my study, it calls into question the assumptions of daily life that seem normal and natural. In other words, scholarly work which critically examines and questions the ideology of the standing social order also helps us to consider the effects public discourse has on institutional functions such as those in schools. Douglas Foley's (1990) notable school ethnography was helpful in understanding 'ethnic politics' as a cultural process in which the old segregated social order was redefined and where community members relied on remembrances of past race relations to redefine the present. A good example is displayed in the cultural deficit view that often persists in the perceptions of minority students in school, and I will discuss this in the next section. I conclude with Santa Ana's (2002) work serving as a classic piece by claiming that the use of metaphor in public discourse constantly shapes the public's worldview. Building on the theories of scholars such as George Lakoff and Michel Foucault, Santa Ana (2002) asserts that, "metaphor, above other structures of language, establishes the basis of people's everyday comprehension of life" (p. 253). Specifically, Santa Ana (2002) utilizes both Lakoff's notion that the everyday lives of individuals are often understood through metaphors and Foucault's theory that discourse in and of itself is a form of power worth questioning. Considering how public discourse shapes the perceptions of Latinos/as in the U.S., I will now discuss a framework commonly referred to as the cultural deficit view, or deficit based thinking; a framework that exists at least partly because of public discourse around Latinos/as.

Cultural Deficit View

The current literature represents a broad range of information relating to linguistically diverse classrooms. The fact remains that there is an obvious increase of multilingual students in schools today. The number of multilingual students enrolling in U.S. classrooms has increased dramatically in the past decade (Brinegar, 2010; Dixon et al., 2012; Many et al., 2009), yet the diversity of teacher populations has not increased at the same rate. Unfortunately this has resulted in a deficit perspective pervasive in schools throughout the U.S. The cultural deficit view contributes to Latino/a students' lack of school success leading to the importance for teachers and schools to recognize that traditions, family values, and individuals themselves vary greatly. In other words, education is not neutral and it demands that we embrace the humanity of every student (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008; Ayers, 2004).

A cultural deficit view affects Latino/a students' school success because it is often grounded in an assimilationist perspective or colonist ideology, and the fact that bilingualism is often regarded as a deficit in our current public school system. Both assimilationist and colonist sentiment require immigrants to conform to the majority. Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) define the cultural deficit view as, "a lens that assumes that certain groups of students (often those labeled by ethnicity, first language, socioeconomic status, and approach to learning tasks) are seen as 'missing' certain skills or lacking background knowledge" (p. 26). The focus then, is on what knowledge these students are lacking, rather than valuing the knowledge and experiences they bring with them to school. In their critical narrative analysis, they find clear indication of assimilation processes and an internalization of the deficit discourse among the family participants in their study. Because the knowledge and experiences of Latino/a students often vary from that of their White, English speaking peers, their so-called "deficiencies" are viewed as needing correction. All of this results in the internalization of failure or unworthiness in Latino/a students' views of themselves.

Many educators would agree that achievement gaps exist and are prevalent among students currently attending public schools; however, the reasons for such gaps are varied. In his book titled, *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap*, Howard (2010) takes a critical look at how race, racism, and culture relate to possible causes of many ethnic groups, including Latinos/as, underachievement in schools. His message is poignant and challenges educators to critically examine deeply ingrained notions of race and culture as they relate to academic achievement. Howard (2010) limits his discussion about the ways in which race and ethnicity are factors in education to five explanations, one of which includes deficit-based thinking. The consequence for these students results in being viewed as "cognitively, culturally, or linguistically deficient" (Howard, 2010, p. 30). Furthermore, the research conducted by Luis C. Moll (1992) is based on understanding the households of Latino/a families. The internalization of such views results in issues of retention, suspension, and expulsions, as well as high dropout rates and low graduation rates for Latino/a students.

It seems obvious that the educational system is not meeting the needs of Latino/a learners, yet Latino/a students are often blamed and suffer the effects. Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) speak to this, reminding us that, "educational policies have not been designed to meet the needs of Latino families and their ways of knowing" (p. 28). An obvious example of how our educational policies are designed around a deficit perspective lies within the way the current system requires the schools to label English language learners. For example, *Limited English Proficient* (LEP) is one of the current labels used to designate English language learners. Although the argument could be made that such labels have repeatedly been changed to lessen such negative casting of labels, they remain in the deficit framework. Several scholars have addressed the labeling of English language learners in U.S. public schools (Cummins & Sayer, 1996; Freeman, 1996; Simich-Dudgeon & Boals, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). In fact Skutnabb-Kangas (2006) speak out against using terms like LEP, asserting that it goes against students' human rights as it defines children by what they do not know rather than what they do know (p. 7). This kind of labeling not only subscribes to a deficit view, but it is also narrowly defined in its understanding of linguistics. In other words, learning a new language involves much more than rhetoric, it also involves learning about the culture associated with that language (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008). As educators, our job calls on us to value the potential in every student and encourage their capability to learn. Borrowing from Moll (1992), a research approach that involves understanding the history of Latinos/as and other aspects of the sociopolitical and economic context of these families will aid in the quality of classroom instruction for Latino/a students. It is necessary to challenge the assumptions that are deeply engrained in the school system. The cultural deficit view negates opportunities for Latino/a student's school success. Deficit views also remain pervasive in the training of pre-service teachers as well as the professional development of current teachers, which I will discuss next.

In a study evaluating the preparedness of preservice teachers for diverse classrooms, the program developers investigated changes in beliefs about culturally relevant teaching in a redesigned early childhood education program. Groulx and Silva (2010) find that many teachers' lack of understanding about diverse groups could possibly lead to lower expectations of those particular students. As a result, this reiterates the student-teacher gap and serves as a framework for the program's goals. Throughout the program the developers planned numerous field assignments for students during each semester and "addressed diversity through readings and projects throughout the program rather than through any stand-alone course" (Groulx & Silva, 2010, p.4). They implement an early and continuous exposure to diverse students in an attempt to better prepare their teachers for the classroom. The program also offers pre-service teachers opportunities to discuss and engage in reflective writing to provide a deeper understanding of their experiences in the communities and schools they spend time in. The authors state that, "students are introduced to the notion of racial identity and cultural difference vs. cultural deficit, second language acquisition theory and multiculturalism" (Groulx & Silva, 2010, p.4). An important fact worth noting in this particular program is the genuine attempt to conceptualize cultural difference as a positive component to teaching rather than the more typical cultural deficit model.

In education, the cultural deficit view assumes that ethnic minority groups are deficient learners and somehow lack the quality of skills compared to their White peers. The cultural deficit view places blame on these families, assuming that their deficiencies are a result of dysfunction. A powerful study speaks to this concept by exploring the impact Ruby Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* has on the ideological development of preservice teachers. Payne's work is intended to help bridge the socio-economic gap through the education of teachers; however, Smiley and Helfenbein (2011) find that Payne's theory sometimes leads to a deficit model causing preservice teachers to reach the idea that there is something wrong with African American children. The author's main criticism of teacher education programs that use Payne as a framework is that the theory assumes that particular groups of children are somehow broken and need to be fixed. Consequently, teachers who have been trained with this model approach classrooms with the idea that many children contain flaws. After analyzing one participant's thoughts, Smiley and Helfenbein (2011) rationalize that, "even though the school they [student teachers] were placed at was a high achieving, nationally recognized school with brand new facilities and a welcoming staff, they began to look for confirmations of the deficit perspectives they brought to the experience" (p.10). Instead, teacher preparation programs should approach the issue by asserting that the problem is more systemic.

Another study relating to teacher deficit beliefs confirms the need for teacher education to provide ways for teachers to explore and to reflect on their own biases and assumptions that they bring to the classroom. In conducting her study, Hertzog (2011) believes that a successful ELL teacher holds deficit beliefs about her students' cultures. This particular case continues to cause Hertzog discomfort, charging her to "glean what lessons can be learned from this seeming mismatch of her teaching practices and beliefs" (Hertzog, 2011, p. 203). Considering the existing literature on unintended cultural deficit views that result from teacher preparation programs, allows us to recognize the need for researchers to critically examine their own perceptions of difference and their approach to diversity issues in the classroom.

Immigrant Generational Status

Why do we refer to U.S. born children of immigrants as "second generation immigrants" rather than "first generation Americans"? This noteworthy observation relates to Santa Ana's

(2002) work analyzing discourse which legitimizes repressive power relations and represents the contradictory status that immigrants and their families have historically faced. Second generation immigrants are often referred to as individuals born in the U.S. to at least one parent who was born in another country. Such individuals are considered U.S. citizens in most cases; however, the perpetuating “immigrant status”, particularly with Latinos/as, lingers. As we have observed through historic and present accounts, the immigrant status works both for and against individuals. In fact, much of the literature remains attentive to the rhetoric, *second-generation immigrants*, for its use in expanding scholarship on their overall progression in American society (i.e. level of education, socioeconomic status). In this section, I will discuss studies that examine the school and educational experiences of second generation Latino/a youth.

In a study concerned with Latino/a and Asian American student victimization, Peguero (2009) argues that the relationship between immigrants’ children and their school educational experiences deserves further attention. His study claims that the victimization of Latino American students in public schools signifies a significant social problem (Peguero, 2009, p. 204). Situated in the growing body of research that examines educational and school experiences of immigrants’ children in the U.S., Peguero’s (2009) study offers a comparison of the victimization patterns across immigrant generational status, with particular focus on Asian and Latino immigrants. In his study, he refers to student victimization in three distinct types: violence, property crime, and fear (Peguero, 2009, p. 191). The student victimization type labeled *fear* is measured by the student reporting that he or she believes school to be an unsafe place and represents the focus for the purpose of my study. Peguero (2009) did not elaborate on the concept of *fear* as much as I would have preferred, and I feel that this concept warrants more attention. In fact, immigrant students’ overall perception on schooling is a critical component to consider when examining their particular school experiences. Furthermore, I was disappointed to find a lack of attention, particularly on second- generation Latino immigrant experiences, and I am left to wonder if this is, in fact, a basic result of the study or if it is due to researcher inattentiveness to critically question and examine second-generation Latino/a immigrant experiences. For example, in the reporting of his results Peguero (2009) finds that, "Latino first-generation students are more likely to report their schools as unsafe in comparison to their Latino third-plus generation immigrant counterparts" (p. 198). Unfortunately, there is no elaboration on second-generation Latino students in reference to *fear* or the reporting of their schools as unsafe. Much of the literature reveals that the idea of feeling safe/unsafe at school represents a relevant issue to consider when dealing with Latino/a students (Barillas-Chon, 2010; Brinegar, 2010; Peguero, 2009; Sosa, 2010) warranting further attention. Finally, it is important to note the author's definitions of immigrant generational status. First-generation refers to foreign-born children with foreign-born parents, second-generation refers to U.S. born children with at least one foreign-born parent, and third-generation or higher generation refers to U.S. born children and parents (Peguero, 2009, p. 187). For the purpose of this study, I will remain focused on second-generation Latino immigrant youth.

Although Peguero (2009) did not elaborate on the student victimization type of *fear*, specifically relating to second-generation Latino immigrant youth to the depth I would have preferred, other findings are relevant for the purposes of my study. Peguero (2009) finds that geographic characteristics are associated with immigrant generational status and student victimization experiences. My study is situated in a suburban school district in the Midwest; therefore, two of his findings serve as building blocks for my study. Although he does not specify immigrant generational status in the reporting of these findings, Peguero's (2009) study reveals that Latino students in the Midwest are more likely to be victimized by violence and report that their schools are unsafe in comparison to Latino students who attend school in the West (p. 201). Unfortunately, he does not offer any kind of critical rationale as to why this occurs. Second, Peguero (2009) finds that, "Latino students who attend urban and rural schools are less likely to be victimized by violence in comparison to Latino students who attend suburban schools" (p. 201). Again, his study lacks any kind of examination for these findings, other than the fact that geographical location is related to the victimization of immigrants' children. If anything, such findings beg for a deeper examination and serve as a rationale for organizing my study around Latino students attending a suburban school district in the Midwest. Finally, I appreciate that Peguero acknowledges the findings within the overall body of literature focusing on the unique school violence and victimization experiences of Asian and Latino American students as limited and inconsistent (Peguero, 2009, p. 190). My hope for this study is to cover U.S. born Latino/a students' (a.k.a. second-generation Latino students') school experiences in order to add to the relevance immigrant generational status has on students.

So far in this section I have discussed a study on the victimization patterns across immigrant generational status of Latino students. Now, I turn to a piece of work that significantly focuses on the second-generation immigrant. In their mixed methods longitudinal study, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) conduct research on immigrant families and children of diverse nationalities. By including twelve, real-life stories of immigrant parents and their children, the author's main purpose is to show the complexities in which parental histories, U.S. context, and children's development blend together to create various paths. The authors state that, "the adaptation of second-generation youth is conditioned by what happens to their parents and that the latter's economic performance and social status are likely to vary" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 46). In other words, less attention has been given to the adaptation outcomes of the new second-generation immigrants compared to those in the past. Therefore, the study seeks to uncover the principal challenges that face these particular American raised children. As mentioned, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) include diverse nationalities in their study; however, my discussion of their study will be limited to findings that particularly relate to Spanish speaking nationalities.

Broadly speaking, the focus of this section of the literature review relates to second-generation immigrant youth. As explained earlier, the category of second-generation immigrant refers to an individual that was born in the U.S. to at least one parent who was born in another country and who immigrated to the U.S. Several factors affect the modes of incorporation for second-generation youth into the mainstream U.S. Many scholars note that one of the main factors to consider is the history of the first generation immigrant's incorporation into the U.S. (Ogbu, 1992; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997). Although previous research utilizes various terminologies to discuss the differences among immigrant generational status and their overall experiences in the U.S., similarities exist to aid in our collective attempt at better understanding such dynamics. For example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) understand such differences as a process of segmented assimilation, whereas Ogbu (1992) discusses the differences by distinguishing immigrant groups as voluntary and involuntary minority status. First, I will discuss what is meant by segmented assimilation and what is meant by voluntary and involuntary minority status. Then I will discuss why such concepts are relevant in the overall discussion of second-generation Latino youth.

Segmented assimilation is broadly understood as the process by which second-generation youth incorporate and adapt into the mainstream U.S. society. More importantly, segmented assimilation is a framework for understanding the various outcomes across immigrant minorities during this process. This poses an important question of what makes some immigrant groups successful while others remain susceptible to downward mobility (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Lee, 2007). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) discuss four factors to be considered when attempting to understand the process of segmented assimilation: 1) the history of the first-generation immigrants, 2) the pace of acculturation among both parents and children, 3) the cultural and economic barriers faced by the second-generation immigrants, and 4) the family and community resources for confronting such barriers (p. 45). Such factors are important to mention in order to show the complexities involved in the process of assimilation. Similar factors are mentioned in Ogbu and Simons' (1998) work which utilizes a cultural-ecological theory of minority school performance and builds upon Ogbu's (1992) classification of voluntary and involuntary minorities. Before proceeding to discuss the similar factors found between Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) understanding of segmented assimilation and Ogbu and Simons' (1998) cultural-ecological theory of minority school performance, it is necessary to discuss Ogbu's (1992) classification of minorities.

The work of educational anthropologist John Ogbu spans three decades with a focus on minority status as related to the identities, experiences, and education of students. His work recognizes that all minority groups face certain similar barriers in school, yet he argues that unparalleled community forces contribute to the differences in some minorities abilities to adjust and do better academically than others (Ogbu, 1992). In other words, understanding the differences in minority academic performance may best be understood by their differing community forces. Therefore, he classifies minorities into three types labeled as autonomous, voluntary, or involuntary in an attempt to better understand how the particular groups' histories shape such community forces (Ogbu, 1992). For the purposes of this study, I will limit my discussion to Ogbu's classification of involuntary and voluntary minority status.

Ogbu's framework for defining minority status is situated on the basis of power relations between groups. Ogbu and Simons (1998) state that, "a population is a minority if it occupies some form of subordinate power position in relation to another population within the same country or society" (p. 162). As discussed above, the different categories of minorities bring attention to the different histories of each group, and are thus likely to include issues of power relations. His classification of minorities is furthermore determined by the nature of White, European-American's involvement in creating minority groups and by the reason(s) a particular group ended up in the U.S. (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Thus, the categories of voluntary and involuntary minorities are exactly as the names suggest. In short, Ogbu (1992) uses the term *immigrant* synonymously with the category of voluntary minority and refers to people who have chosen to move to the U.S. for better opportunities. He also refers to the category of involuntary minorities as *non-immigrant*, meaning that such groups of people are part of U.S. society due to slavery, conquest, or colonization (Ogbu, 1992; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). It is important to point out that he specifies Mexican-Americans of Southwest origin and Puerto Ricans as involuntary minorities, but many other Spanish-speaking groups are categorized by Ogbu (1992) as voluntary minorities. In concluding this discussion, one can consider Ogbu's voluntary and involuntary minority classification system as a framework for understanding how a group's collective history contributes to the beliefs and behaviors of various minority groups in the U.S. Having discussed a theory on segmented assimilation and a framework for understanding the differences among minority groups, I will now move on to discuss two findings from the work of Ogbu and Simons (1998) and Portes and Rumbaut (2001) as relevant points to consider for my study.

Continuing the discussion on voluntary and involuntary minorities, Ogbu and Simons (1998) generally find that the education of the descendants of immigrants, meaning second-, third-, or fourth-generation U.S. born children, "continues to be influenced by the community forces of their forebears" (p. 166). Again, community forces refer to such notions as a group's cultural frame of reference, educational strategies, and/or the degree of trust in the dominant group (Ogbu, 1992). One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether anyone is reassessing the experiences of the community forces of the original group of minorities (voluntary or involuntary). Borrowing from Lomawaima and McCarty (2006), "history is a social construction…no historical account is disinterested or politically neutral" (p. xxiv),

It seems that Ogbu's typology for categorizing minorities somewhat assumes that history is stagnant and that he lacks consideration of how history is (re)constructed. Other critiques of Ogbu claim that his work falls into deficit discourse, focusing mostly on the negative and dysfunction of minorities (Foley, 2004). Although he does include the positive and negative attitudes or behaviors related to the particular minority groups and their implications for school performance (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), I continue to have reservations about what seems to be a dualistic framework in his typology.

Both Ogbu's (1992) theory and Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) segmented assimilation theory share the understanding that the cultural and structural barriers second-generation immigrants face are directly related to the first generation's history and incorporation into the

U.S. As such, it is imperative to understand the collective history of the current, second-generation students' family backgrounds to better understand what resources and perspectives they may bring with them to school. This helps us better understand their reactions and responses to current school practices that either hinder or benefit their overall schooling experiences. My study aimed to focus on the school-based learning experiences of multilingual Latino/a students who were all of second-generation status. With this in mind, I cannot ignore the alarming findings specific to Mexican-Americans in Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) longitudinal study, which according to the authors, "deserves special attention" (p. 279). Their findings suggest that Mexican-Americans are the only Latino group in the study who historically experience a difficult process of adaptation, pointing to the likelihood of continual downward assimilation. They furthermore state that, "the cumulative disadvantages under which its second-generation struggles should be a prime practical concern" (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, p. 279). The authors furthermore argue that this is a result of perceived external hostility. With all of this in mind, my study aimed to bring together both the perceived struggles as well as the perceived benefits in the schooling experiences of multilingual Latino students in order to show the complexities of the educational lives of such students. My hope was that my interpretations of the multilingual Latino/a student participants' stories and my critical examination of the role race plays in those experiences coalesce into an engaging piece of literature that illustrates the complexities of such students' schooling experiences. As the literature suggests, there is a need to address the particular experiences faced by second-generation immigrants; furthermore, so as not to fall under the same deficit discourse as Ogbu's critics suggest he did, I will turn to studies that attempt to focus on second-generation immigrant success.

Second-generation Immigrant Success

Most of the literature on generational status and immigrant success examines success in higher education or motivation upon entering college. There is a limited amount of research that focuses on generational immigrant status youth success prior to high school. I hope that my study will stimulate focus on school success of second-generation immigrants before the high school or college years rather than celebrating success for making it through high school or to college as most of the literature does. A study that prompted my attention to both the generational status and school success of Latinos/as lies within Valenzuela's (1999) research, which focuses on generational differences in academic achievement among Mexican youth. In her modified ethnographic study, she describes many ways in which American schools subtract resources from Mexican youth; at the same time, she carefully constructs a focus on the many strengths such youth bring to school. In this section, I will briefly discuss Valenzuela's (1999) notable study as well as other studies that contribute to the literature on immigrant academic success.

Although Valenzuela's study involves a variety of Mexican and Mexican-American generational-status youth, it remains relevant for my study. In further reflection upon her study, Valenzuela (1999) argues for the need to view knowledge as imminently cultural, rather than neutral. In other words, her study reveals that Mexican and Mexican-American youth maintain valuable ideas and definitions of education, yet American schools often dismiss these ideas. Other important factors that emerge in her analysis of generational differences are students' dual frame of reference, academic competence, social capital, and the "centrality of females in academic-related endeavors" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 117). Furthermore, she describes U.S. born youth involved in her study as extremely supportive of one another. Valenzuela (1999) states that, "I left this group of students feeling a strong sense of the power of interdependence" (p. 157). These students encourage one another and hold each other accountable while holding an overall positive attitude about schools and teachers. In her final analysis of the experiences of the students in her study, Valenzuela (1999) finds clarity in the fact that poor achievement among U.S. born youths is not due to lack of diligence, but rather to the ways in which American schools subtract or dismiss the resources such youths bring to school.

In another study, Easley Jr., Bianco, and Leech (2012) connect their findings back to public school teachers, making the findings relevant for practicing teachers. The aim of their qualitative study was to better understand the factors that motivate academically successful students of first-generation Mexican heritage (previously noted as second-generation immigrants) who attend college. A significant finding is revealed, which they refer to as *Ganas*. *Ganas* was "the most frequently cited trait that participants held in common" (Easly Jr., Bianco, & Leech, 2012, p. 69) and refers to participant parents' struggles and sacrifices as a key motivator for their current academic success. I appreciate the authors' recommended significance to public school teachers by suggesting that teachers find ways to creatively explore the histories, struggles, and sacrifices of the families of second-generation immigrants. They state that, "by putting young children in touch with their stories and ethnic identity, perhaps teachers can induce the kind of *Ganas* experienced by the participants in the current study" (Easly Jr., Bianco, &Leech, 2012, p. 176). Furthermore, their study reveals that, "there are many positive attributes of Latino/a students that are left out of the current discourse" (Easley Jr., Bianco, & Leech, 2012, p. 75). This is similar to many other scholars who agree that Latino/s students' academic achievements are missing in the literature (Borrero, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Nieto, 2002). Next, I will discuss a study that focuses on the success of a group of Latino/a high school seniors.

In Noah Borrero's (2011) qualitative study involving eight high school seniors, he recognizes many assets held by the students, including linguistic ability and resilience. Students are admired for their bilingual ability rather than being stigmatized as limited English speakers. Both linguistic ability and resilience are further discussed in the next section of this literature review. Borrero's (2011) study reveals four main themes about students' perceptions of success upon high school graduation and college initiation, including the following: college talk, dynamic family roles, school as a support system, and community resources. The students in his study believed that college held the key to their futures. As Borrero (2011) describes their accomplishment, "for most, they are the first in their families to go to college, and they feel both pride and responsibility as a part of this opportunity" (p. 26). These findings allude to the fact that the Latino/a youth involved in his study are highly driven, but at the same time, they carry a burden. The pressures of being the first generation to attend college while attempting to fund this education remain commendable.

These studies point out the struggles Latino/a students face in schools and communities while showing how American schools act as subtractive agents. While many of the aforementioned scholars acknowledge that the current literature lacks a focus on the academic achievements and success of Latino/a students, I feel that the studies I have included attempt to acknowledge the positive attributes Latino/a students have to offer. As Borrero (2011) states, “we must embrace the multicultural backgrounds of our youth for the tremendous resources that they are” (p. 29). The students involved in each of these studies reveal that they are capable of achieving academic success while offering many attributes that schools and educators alike may learn from. Next, I will discuss the literature that includes Latino/a narratives of school life in the final section of my literature review.

Latino/a Narratives of School Life

There is a limited amount of literature that includes the narratives of Latino/a school children. In fact, there is a limited amount of literature that includes the narratives of various ethnicities of school children, overall. I find this interesting, since there is an overwhelming amount of literature denoting the changing demographics in U.S. schools (Brinegar, 2010; Hakuta, 2011, Howard, 2010, Many et al., 2009), let alone the overwhelming amount of literature attempting to address the so called achievement gap between Whites and various other ethnic groups (Gamble, Kim, & An, 2012; Howard, 2010; Kenyatta, 2010). In order to understand our students, their experiences and the backgrounds they come from, we need to engage with their perspectives and attend to what can be learned from such perspectives. Brinegar (2010) supports this adding that, “it is imperative to recognize students as stakeholders in educational school reform” (p. 16). Students need to be invited into such dialogue, and by doing so they validate ownership of their own education. In this section, I will discuss the literature that includes Latino/s students' narratives of school-life.

Findings in research that include student narratives point to the importance of Latino/a students' relationships with their teachers or with other peers. In a study that focuses on at-risk Latino/a adolescents, Balagna, Young, and Smith (2013) find that there is a prominent emphasis on interpersonal relationships when they interviewed student participants. Some of the needs that Latino/a students revealed in their interview responses were an inclusive climate at school, extra help with school work and flexibility with assignment due dates, and caring teachers. A large portion of their research indicates that the student-teacher relationship can impact the type of engagement a student experiences at school. For example, one group of participants reported more willingness to meet the expectations and confide their needs to the teacher when the teacher was able to give them individual attention (Balagna, Young, & Smith, 2013). Although the participants spoke of the impact of supportive teachers, they also expressed their challenges with homework. In fact, homework was their least favorite part of school. Their experiences with homework reveal how resourceful Latino/a students can be. In fact, their sources for homework help were older siblings, neighbors, and friends (Balagna, Young, & Smith, 2013, p. 108), unlike that of many of their White peers who often rely on parents for homework help. This is a striking example of the academic efforts made by Latino/a students, yet remains as an unrecognized resource by schools. The assumption of the current school system is that every student leaves school and has easy access to the resources necessary to succeed academically, and although many Latino/a students can access those resources, they often times have to go to great lengths, making them quite resourceful in their efforts.

On the other hand, in a study that focuses on resilience among students of Mexican descent, Sosa (2012) finds that students reported individualized attention from only a few teachers, which hindered them from approaching teachers about their needs. We know that student participants in multiple studies refer to the student-teacher relationship as highly important in helping them feel engaged and valued at school, but that only a few teachers actually meet these needs. In fact, Cuero's (2009) qualitative study involving bilingual Latino/a fifth graders and their teachers find that one teacher, in recognizing her student's intellect, still labeled him as a behavior problem stating that, "he didn't like rules" (p. 150). This reminds me of the habit that some teachers fall into- focusing on the negative rather than the positive. In reading Cuero's (2009) study, I ponder why some behaviors, such as not catering to rules, are not viewed as leadership or individualism. When schools view certain behaviors negatively to the point that it overshadows the students' positive assets, such students do not approach teachers regarding their needs, leading me to another point relating to Latino/a learners. In Balagna, Young, and Smith's (2013) study, students used words such as "depressed" and "embarrassed" when speaking about student-teacher interactions (p. 109). This reveals the sensitivity held by many Latino/a learners and reminds us of an important yet basic human characteristic. Although Latino/a students' sensitivity isn't necessarily framed as a positive trait in their study, I feel that it is another resource Latino/a students bring to school that goes unrecognized. Furthermore, when teachers or other school personnel begin to view human traits, such as sensitivity, in our Latino/a students as valued resources, we begin to better understand how and why our students (re)act to various school situations.

The relationships Latino/a students have with their teachers affect the way they feel about the school environment or physical space in the school. Sosa (2012) finds that students critique the classroom as uninviting, relating behavioral problems as reactions to these uncomfortable spaces. Sosa (2012) states that, "closely related to an uncomfortable classroom environment is the lack of connection and relatedness to teachers" (p. 41). On the other hand, Barillas-Chon (2010) find that students feel good about themselves when physical safe spaces, such as a library or a Newcomer's classroom, are provided for them to use while adding a space where they can simply "hang out" (p. 311). Unfortunately, students do not always utilize these spaces or approach their teachers with needs, even though positive relationships remain intact. In analyzing the literature, it becomes clear that Latino/a students face many challenges in the context of school and in which they deserve recognition. Latino/a students are resilient to challenging academics, non-accepting teachers, and discriminating peers that they face in the context of school. Resiliency should not be a resource that is relegated, but rather a promoted resource that aids in the integration into U.S. public school culture.

Some scholars' reason that Latino/a students lack the social capital required to fully access help from teachers or to engage in the public spaces provided to them by the school (Barillas-Chon, 2010; Sosa, 2012). Although both of these studies refer to the lack of social capital held by specific students, they frame it differently. In his critical look at the (un)welcoming practices of one school, Barillas-Chon (2010) holds the school accountable for not directly helping Oaxaqueno/a students gain social capital. On the other hand, Sosa (2012) frames this as a matter of resilience among Mexican students. Therefore, we are left with an understanding that such groups of students do in fact lack the social capital that is traditionally valued in American school culture; however, we are left to question whether or not it is the school's responsibility to explicitly help students (and their families) gain the social capital required for school success. I argue that Latino/a students and families do in fact have a strong social capital through their ethnic communities, but that it is simply not the kind of social capital valued in the public school system. Thinking in terms of social capital, a concept developed by James Coleman in the early 1980s, individual relationships can serve as a great resource (Arum, Beattie, & Ford, 2011). Coleman and Hoffer (2011) further elaborate on this by adding that trust represents a form of social capital (p. 50). Referring to the findings that illustrate relationships as an important factor in student engagement in school, we cannot necessarily conclude that positive student-teacher relationships are equivalent to students possessing the needed social capital.

Student-teacher relationships and environment pair with issues around organization of classes and the school day. Next, I will discuss a study that poses the need to consider organization and pedagogy through multiple perspectives. Described as a three year, ethnographic study Brinegar (2010) examines the schooling experiences of young adolescent immigrant and refugee students in a small town. The research presented in this article uses the perspectives of both immigrant students and their teachers. More specifically, the study looks at the organizational practices in one middle school's teaming of teachers and multiage grouping. Findings for this particular study indicate that the students prefer travelling within the school in smaller groups, rather than the format of being in the whole student body and school. There is a sense of wanting things to be as manageable as possible for the students. This leads one to conclude that the learning needs of Latino/a students may be better suited for smaller class sizes. Both students and teachers allude to the importance of consistency, but mainly teachers spoke of this as a major benefit of teaming for their immigrant and refugee students. An important finding illustrates the benefits and positive feedback of multiyear teams. Brinegar (2010) states that, "teaming has potential for providing immigrant and refugee young adolescents with the safe space necessary for feeling comfortable with who they are and receiving the support they need" (p. 5). What is different in the Brinegar (2010) study from that of the Barillas-Chon (2010) and Sosa (2012) studies, in regards to safe spaces and student-teacher relationships, is that in the Brinegar (2010) study, the student-teacher relationships that are formed through participating in a multiyear teaming system, therefore helps immigrant and refugee students ease into mainstream classrooms, thus providing an almost guaranteed "safe space" for these particular students. Implications from this study may help us realize the need to examine the organizational structures of schools through the lens of particular groups of students, such as multilingual Latino/a learners.

Finally, it seems that language represents an obvious resource that schools should value as an asset in multilingual Latino/a learners. Unfortunately, the label of English language learner upon a student's entrance into a U.S. public school speaks otherwise. Although issues of multilingualism go beyond the scope of this study, I think it is important to highlight an example that views language as a resource. In a study about child translators during parent-teacher conferencing, Garcia-Sanchez, Orellana, and Hopkins (2011) do a good job in recognizing the complexities of translation. They state that, “the complexities of interpretation work are often not recognized, as people assume translation is easy for bilinguals” (p. 148). Although the focus of their study differs from the focus of this proposed study, it sheds light on the sophisticated thinking required in translating one language to another. For example, the work of translation involves the ability to paraphrase, summarize, and distinguish between main points and secondary points (Garcia-Sanchez, Orellana, & Hopkins, 2011, p. 148). Interestingly enough, these same skills are similar to, if not the same as the skills students must know before taking the standardized reading and writing tests required by the public school system. Unfortunately, when these same skills are measured by a standardized test, many Latino/a students are considered deficient. As a teacher who has conducted many parent-teacher conferences requiring my students to act as translators, I value such talents in students. Not only does this show us that language is a valuable resource these children bring with them to school, but they are also capable of completing a very sophisticated and intellectually demanding task.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the school-based experiences of multilingual Latino/a students; however, this study will add to the literature that critically examines and questions school practices that may intend to offer equal resources to Latino/a learners, but in fact prevent Latino/a students from fully integrating into the public school climate because of their English proficiency or other cultural qualities. The resources multilingual Latino/a students bring to school are abundant, and I have attempted to highlight some of these resources through the studies of other scholars. Skills that Latino/a learners may possess include resourcefulness, leadership skills, sensitivity, resilience, and multilingualism. I have also attempted to uncover some of the needs that should be addressed in order to ensure school success among multilingual Latino/a learners. Considerations include smaller class sizes, caring and sensitive teachers, extra time for school work, and a safe space.

In this literature review I have discussed historically relevant occurrences Latinos/as have faced in American schools and the contradictory expectations the marginalized group of society often faced. I have examined how scholars theorize cultural deficit ideology and its effect on both students and teachers. I have included a discussion on the difficulties faced by different generations of Latino/a immigrants, yet highlighted second-generation Latino/a immigrant success. I concluded with a review of studies that included Latino/a student narratives of schooling experiences. To reiterate, my study was guided by the following research questions: How do multilingual Latino/a students age eleven to fourteen experience school-based learning? How do multilingual Latino/a students' stories reveal the learning resources they bring to school? What learning needs do multilingual Latino/a students think schools should pay attention to? In what ways, if any, does race play a role in the schooling experiences of multilingual Latino/a students? The insights gleaned from the existing literature were referred to as I analyzed the data. In the next chapter I discuss the methodology for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The intersection of language, culture, and learning lies at the heart of my interest for this study. Examining what is happening with multilingual Latino/a students in U.S. public school classrooms, I hoped to elucidate their stories that seemingly remain barely audible. I then hoped to construct a critical tale in order to illustrate the role of race and racism as played out in their stories. The main research question that guided this study was: How do multilingual Latino/a students, age eleven to fourteen, experience school-based learning in a suburban public school located in the Midwest? Three subquestions were also used to guide my study: How do multilingual Latino/a students' stories reveal the learning resources they bring to school? What learning needs do multilingual Latino/a students think schools should pay attention to? In what ways, if any, does race play a role in the schooling experiences of multilingual Latino/a students? To address these questions, a qualitative research design was conducted from a combination of an interpretivist paradigm and Latino Critical Theory. Qualitative methods were used for data collection including the use of observations, interviews, a focus group, and a drawing or writing prompt. I used two phases of data analysis. I used an interpretive lens in an attempt to respect the authentic stories of my participants as I conducted an open coding process. Then, I used a critical lens to examine the issue of race, language, and power. The remainder of this chapter discusses, in detail, the theoretical framework, data collection, and data analysis that were used to conduct this study.

Theoretical Framework

As I sat down to embark on a carefully laid out research journey, I was reminded of the gentle words of Maureen Barbieri (2002) who states, “I believe we all need to spend more time together, listening closely to what our students are trying to tell us” (p. 178). Her work with English language learners continues to speak to me today as I carefully consider my approach for this qualitative study. That said, I chose to approach this study from a combination of two frameworks, interpretivism and Latino/a Critical Theory (LatCrit), which I discuss first. Interpretivism is commonly associated with the German philosopher Max Weber, although Alfred Schutz deserves credit for making interpretive qualitative research comparably rigorous to that of scientific, quantitative research. From an interpretivist approach, reality is socially constructed by individuals within their social, political, and historical contexts. Interpretive qualitative studies are widely used and common in the field of education. A common thread in qualitative research that is situated in interpretivism is an interest in understanding participants’ own experiences, how participants construct their worlds, and what meanings participants attribute to those experiences (Merriam, 2002, p. 38). The interpretive design of this study allowed me to focus on my student participants’ perspectives, thus allowing me to remain receptive to the ways they made sense of their world.

Hermeneutic Inquiry

It is important to mention the various approaches to interpretive work, at least as far as which interpretive approach was most appropriate for this study. Crotty (1998) discusses three approaches to interpretive inquiry: hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism (p. 71). For this study, it is most appropriate to discuss hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; van Manen, 1990). Originally, hermeneutics dealt with interpretation of a text, but it also extends to contextual examination of a phenomenon. This especially rings true for a qualitative study. Hermeneutics seek meanings, and in the hermeneutical approach, “interpretation functions as an exemplary nodal point of meanings that are embedded in the situation” (van Manen, 1990, p. 18). In other words, the hermeneutic approach attempts to point out the meaning of something within a text or some other form of expression in context. This study is grounded in the insights of such interpretive theorists as David Geoffrey Smith, Max van Manen, and Ted Aoki. I am drawn to the insights of Ted Aoki who uses hermeneutics to deal with the issue of language and culture.

Borrowing from a nineteenth century German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher’s extension of hermeneutics asserts that this type of interpretive analysis is able to offer a perspective that the author may not have (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). According to van Manen (1990), one may consider phenomenology as the description of lived experience and hermeneutics as an interpretation of lived experience through symbolic form. A further explanation is given by Smith (1991), who describes the importance of hermeneutic work as “showing the way in which the meaning of anything is always arrived at referentially and relationally rather than (for want of a better word) absolutely” (p. 197). Viewing hermeneutic inquiry as such means that one must constantly question how meaning is arrived at. The hermeneutic approach questions the validity of conclusions and the processes for which one arrives at such, and is regarded as a response to the crisis of understanding (Woodbrooks, 1991). I was interested in seeking in-depth understanding of multilingual Latinos/as school-based learning experiences, not merely a description of a phenomenon. In this hermeneutic endeavor, I also tried to remain self-reflexive and sustained a conscious awareness of who I am in relation to my participants, which relates to an effort that examines who my participants are in relation to their world. In other words, the hermeneutical inquirer’s process of self-reflection becomes embedded and is essential to the interpretive process. The use of a reflective journal allowed me to engage a *hermeneutic circle*, in which my attempts at understanding were constantly concerned with the dynamics of both the part and the whole, thus engaging the interpretive process.

Hermeneutical research is described by Smith (1991) as a multidimensional enterprise with in-depth interpretation that shows the connection between experience and expression (p. 191-201). The multidimensionality Smith (1991) refers to is comparable to Aoki's work in seeking out new orientations for understanding that free us from monodimensionality. One example is Aoki's (1987) exploration of language as a way to understand curriculum orientations. He demonstrates an alternative curriculum orientation by attempting to understand the dialectic relationship between the second language and the mother tongue (Aoki, 1987, p. 235-245), thus providing a shift in focus for educators. The attention is taken off of language acquisition and shifts to a focus on the tension between two languages. Therefore, Aoki (1987) offers an alternative understanding of bilingualism stating that, "it is to belong to two worlds at once and yet not belong to either completely" (p. 243). What both Smith (1991) and Aoki (1980) refer to in their descriptions of interpretive work is that such inquiry requires a constant and thorough examination of others and ourselves as process. Good hermeneutical inquiry requires one to approach his/her phenomenon from multiple angles and lenses in order to reconceptualize our ideas and create meanings. Hermeneutics served as an appropriate interpretive approach for understanding the student participants' everyday lives. Finally, because the hermeneutical interpretive approach "aims at explicating the various meanings embedded in a text" (van Manen, 1990, p. 39) and searches for deeper meaning of a phenomenon, it has a natural bridge with critical analysis.

Latino Critical Theory

In chapter one I introduced the combination of the interpretivist perspectives and LatCrit to situate my study. I discussed the two frameworks as complementary, while also complicating the discussion by addressing the tensions that exist between interpretivism and critical inquiry. In this chapter, I have discussed hermeneutics, an approach of interpretivism, as an appropriate fit for this study. The second framework utilized for this qualitative study was Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit), a strand of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Originally developed by legal scholars, CRT has become more common in research that attempts to address the role of race and racism in the field of education. Critical Race Theory assumes that *race* differentiation exists in the institutional policies, programs and practices that interfere with ethnic minority students' rights and abilities to obtain the same educational opportunities available to the dominant majority white society (Villalpando, 2004). LatCrit builds on the themes of CRT while adding the unique perspectives of Latino/a experience in the United States. Not only does it assume race differentiation exists, but it also assumes a bias exists against Latinos/as in school. As a teacher whose work impacts the lives of multilingual Latino/a students, I chose LatCrit because it pairs with an interpretive theoretical frame that allowed me to problematize the dominant discourse (that of White, middle-class discourse). Furthermore, Critical Race Theory aligns with my own beliefs and thinking that racism is 'normal', not aberrant, in the U.S. society (Ladson-Billings, 1998). A LatCrit framework was appropriate for this study because I sought to better understand the unique and individual nature of multilingual Latino/a learners' school-based experiences through the telling of their own stories. Through their stories, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors they bring with them to school in order to consider how their unique needs may be met. The qualitative nature of this study allowed the possibility of such discovery while a Latino Critical Theory framework enabled me to critically examine the schooling experiences particular to those of multilingual Latino/a students.

The forefront of this study examined how multilingual Latino/a students who attend public schools in the Midwest experience school-based learning. Therefore, LatCrit allowed me as the researcher to be attentive to the storied experiences of students who may otherwise remain silenced, considering that one of the main tenants of the broader CRT is the use of storytelling and narratives to examine race and racism (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Dixon and Rousseau (2005) add to this stating that, "it is not enough to simply tell the stories of people of colour [*sic*]. Rather, the educational experiences revealed through those stories must then be subject to deeper analysis using the CRT lens" (p. 13). Therefore, my data analysis offers two layers in order to address this issue. First, I "told the stories" of my participants using a hermeneutical interpretive approach, then I analyzed the data with a critical lens, which focused on issues of race, language, and power. From a LatCrit framework, I gained an understanding of multilingual Latino/a students' unique schooling experiences due to the critical and emancipatory power the framework offers. My beliefs are in line with critical race theorists' arguments in that, "without authentic voices of people of colour [*sic*] it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58). Further research should focus on the experiences of multilingual Latino/a students in school. Using a Latino Critical Theory framework, this study will aid in adding insights into the inequity in education that is *always already* a function of race and racism (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005) and possibly multilingual Latino/a students' resourcefulness in dealing with it.

A continued application of Latino Critical Theory remains in the field of education. LatCrit builds on the tenets of CRT, which remain the basis for challenging existing discourse, but more importantly and of most significance is the awareness that LatCrit brings to "the racial dynamic that affects Latinos/as is as distinct from the familiar Black/White dichotomy" (Espinoza & Harris, 1998; Esquivel, 2003; Foley, 1997; Haney-Lopez, 1997; Parker, 2003; Perea, 1998; Rolon-Dow, 2005; Solorzano, 1997; Valdes, 1996). In other words, the Latino/a population and the Black population are not affected by race and racism in the same way. Rierson (2006) discusses three distinctions specific to the racial dynamic affecting Latinos/as, 1) Latinos/as often experience a language barrier that Blacks typically do not 2) Latinos/as have higher illegal immigration rates than Blacks, thus affecting the way they are seen by other Americans 3) Based on the linguistic rules of Spanish, the word "Latino" can pertain to both men and women; however, the "o" can be changed to an "a", giving voice to the female perspective of race and racism (p. 52). The topic of racial issues in the U.S. often finds itself synonymous with the history and experiences of the Black population. Although it goes without saying, LatCrit does not devalue the struggles of Blacks; rather it serves to bring forth relevant issues that specifically affect the Latino/a population. With the focus of my study remaining specific to school-based learning experiences of multilingual Latino/a students, the framework of LatCrit allows us to know more about the issues multilingual Latinos/as face in public school.

Methodology

This qualitative research design utilized case study methods. Yin (1994) characterizes a case study as an inquiry that allows for understanding complex social phenomena while preserving the holistic and meaningful characteristics of everyday events. The philosophical underpinnings for case study approach are compatible with an interpretive framework (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). This means that a case study approach allows for the subjective human creation of meaning and that truth is dependent on one's perspective. This is important to my study because it aimed to capture the perspectives of multilingual Latino/a students and their experiences in school. Therefore, the qualitative nature of this case study places high value on understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 1998).

A determination of the case must be defined when designing a qualitative case study. As defined by Miles and Huberman (1994), a case is "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your "unit of analysis" (p. 25). The case for this study was the individual participants, who are multilingual Latino/a students. Furthermore, Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) suggest placing boundaries on a case in order to prevent the study from becoming too broad. There are many suggestions for binding a case. Creswell (2003) suggests binding a case by time and place, further ensuring that the study remains reasonable in scope; therefore, this study took place during the 2014-2015 academic year, at the selected participants' school.

I believe case study to be a good fit for my research because it allowed me to better understand the school-based experiences of multilingual Latino/a students in a particular context. Case study methodology also allowed for the reporting of data to remain in a story form. This is important because this method connects to the framework of LatCrit in that it works to uncover the experiences of people of color through observations, interviews, focus groups, and writing or drawing prompts that gather narratives, stories, and counter-stories (Bell, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Participant Selection

Keeping in mind that this study was qualitative with a focus on multilingual Latino/a students' experiences with the goal focused on enriching the understanding of those experiences. Because of this, a selection of fertile exemplars is needed. Merriam (2002) gives the following advice, "since qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, it is important to select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 12). Because of my research question, how do multilingual Latino/a students experience school-based learning in a U.S. public school, this study employed purposeful sampling. This means that I deliberately selected the most appropriate participants for my study. To do so, Merriam (2002) suggests first determining essential criteria in choosing appropriate participants. I chose multilingual Latino/a students for this study, because of my experiences as a classroom teacher of a culturally and linguistically diverse population. Although I am not a fluent Spanish speaker, I am familiar with the Spanish language, adding to the rationale behind the selection of participants for this study. This population, which has long experienced the explicit and implicit effects of racism in social institutions such as schools (Yosso, 2006), further drives my desire to better understand the needs of multilingual Latino/a students in the current public school system.

Upon entering the public school system for which this study took place, all families must identify the languages spoken at home on a state mandated form called the *Home Language Survey*. My participants, who are U.S. born Latinos/as, all spoke Spanish in the home and as their first language. Therefore students were classified as "Hispanic" by the public school system and were identified as English Language Learner (ELL) whose native language is Spanish. Students are given an English assessment and are then given the appropriate language designation so they can receive proper programming. To aid in identifying potential participants, I sent an email to principals and teachers, describing my research plan and asked for a recommended participant pool. My goal was to select four to eight participants for this study. I hoped to find an equal balance of both male and female participants between the ages of eleven and fourteen. I started with eight participants; however, one participant withdrew from school so only seven participants were involved with my study from start to finish. I chose this age range of participants due to my experiences in teaching students in this age group, and because I preferred for them to have multiple years of U.S. schooling experience to talk about during the interviews. My goal was to select participants who could speak, read, and write in both Spanish and English in an attempt to make communication between the participants and myself easier and to avoid hiring a translator.

This research took place in a suburban location in the Midwest. The suburban school district had two intermediate sites that housed only fifth and sixth grades. The two grade levels were structured on completely different schedules; almost as if they were two different schools in one building. I worked as a fifth grade ELD teacher at one of the intermediate sites and planned to conduct my study at the other intermediate site within the district. Due to staffing needs that came up in the middle of the school year, I was required to work with fifth graders at both of the intermediate sites. The participants in this study were all sixth graders and had completely transitioned to the mainstream classroom. Therefore, none of the participants were my students. The collection of data took place at one of the intermediate sites for which the participants attended. Observations were conducted in the selected classrooms and individual interviews were conducted in a quiet area of the school building. Finally, the participants completed the drawing or writing prompt while in class during the school day. They were not required to take anything home.

Data Collection

After all permissions were granted, the data for this study was gathered primarily from four sources. The data sources for this study included observations, semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview, and a prompt for drawing or writing. As a supplement to the data, I used a research journal to record the research process and to record my own personal reactions throughout the research process.

I contacted principals and ESL teachers by emailing a letter that explained the type of research I wanted to do and I asked for a list of potential participants. The participants were U.S. born Latinos/as, ages eleven to fourteen, and designated as English Language Learners. Beginning in August 2014, I arranged a couple of times to visit with the ESL teacher about scheduling at the school where this study took place. This gave me an opportunity to become familiar with the dynamics of the school day. This also allowed for students, parents, and teachers to settle into the routine of a new school year and allowed official paperwork to be filed. I waited until September 2014 to introduce my research plan in a letter to parents and students. I also obtained parent consent and child assent forms at this time. I planned to select four to eight participants for my study, aiming for an equal balance of genders. Fourteen letters were originally sent out and I received a total of eight signed parent consent and child assent forms. All of which were students who could speak fluent English and who were willing to speak openly and enthusiastically in conversation. Concurrently, I began writing in my research journal. My plan was to write in my journal on a weekly basis, but there were times that I wished to do so more frequently. Furthermore, I kept a research journal until the study was complete.

Once all permissions were granted and I spent some time acquainting myself to the school site, classrooms, teachers, and participants, I began to set up observations with the participants' teachers and semi-structured interviews with each of the multilingual Latino/a student participants. I observed each participant twice, each time in a different classroom with a different teacher. The first round of observations were in September, lasting approximately forty-five minutes each. The second round of observations were in November, lasting approximately forty-five minutes each. During the observations, I payed particular attention to participants' behavior in class, how they interacted with teachers, how they interacted with peers, and how the participants engaged with the curriculum.

Although I arranged for interview questions and prompts ahead of time, I wanted the interviews to be conversational. As deMarrais (2004) points out, to gain the in-depth knowledge that qualitative researchers try to elicit through interviewing, the interview must remain open-ended and tailored to fit each individual interview experience (p. 52-53). As this study attempted to understand multilingual Latino/a students' perspectives on their school-based experiences, the use of qualitative, semi-structured interviews was appropriate and aligns with the framework for this study. I arranged for the first set of interviews to be conducted with each participant during the month of October 2014. The first set of interviews focused on classroom incidents and the kinds of relationships they hoped to have with teachers and peers (See Appendix B for the first set of interview questions).

In November 2014, I asked participants to choose either to draw pictures or write about school (see Appendix C for the writing prompt and see Appendix D for the drawing prompt). I gave them a couple of days to complete the request (which was not graded and did not affect their grades in any way), then I asked them to tell me about their drawing or writing prompt. I chose to include a drawing prompt as a data source because drawing is often times a preferable form of expression for students, especially ELL students at their ages. In my experiences working with ELL students, drawing is a comfortable and safe task for students to communicate. In December 2014, I arranged for a second set of interviews to be conducted with each participant. The second set of interviews focused on how they felt about the school year so far, as well as their general feelings about overall schooling experiences (see Appendix E for the second set of interview questions). I immediately began transcribing interviews as they were conducted and continued to write in my research journal through this process. Interviews were thirty-five to forty-five minutes in length and were held in a quiet place in the school building. I arranged for interviews ahead of time, asking a teacher if I could utilize her classroom when the classroom was typically empty. Some of the interviews had to be conducted at a table at the end of a hallway. A digital recording device was used to record each interview.

By December 2014, I had all interviews conducted and drawing or writing prompts collected so that over the two-week winter break I was able to finish transcribing and began to organize the data for member checking. Warren and Karner (2010) recommend that the interviewer transcribe her own interviews for an added opportunity to relearn and relisten to the respondents (p. 16). In January 2015, when everyone had returned to school from winter break, I arranged a time to meet briefly with each participant in order to conduct member checks. I wanted to confirm that I had recorded responses accurately and checked to see if there was anything the participants wanted to change or add to their previous responses. This allowed me to elicit emphasis in any area needed. Furthermore, I was able to utilize some of the reoccurring topics from the individual interviews to organize my focus group interview. At this time, I arranged to conduct a focus group interview with some of the students (see Appendix F for the focus group questions).

In short, the timeline for data collection for this study took place over the course of one fall semester, with formal data collection beginning in September 2014 and ending in December 2014. January 2015 was utilized for member checking, a focus group interview, and concluded the data collection phase. To reiterate, the data sources for this study included two observations, two individual semi-structured interviews, individual participant drawings or writings, and a focus group interview. I also relied on my research journal as a supplemental data source. Merriam (1988) devotes special attention to the relationship between the data collection and the data analysis phase of the research process stating that, “collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research” (p. 123). I began my analysis as I collected data by way of journaling. During the collection phase, I took time to record notes of queries or thoughts that occurred before moving on to more intensive analysis. Once all of the data was collected, member-checked, and transcribed, I began a more thorough phase of analysis.

Data Analysis

For my data analysis I utilized traditions from interpretivism and Latino Critical Theory. I felt that the use of the two allowed me to remain open to my participants' lived world while enabling me to challenge institutionalized racism, both of which were valuable in answering my research questions to uncover important findings. I began data analysis by bringing the collected and printed versions of all data sources together in an organized manner for easy retrievability. Yin (1984) refers to the organization of data sources as the *case study data base*; this can look like a filing system of some sort, making it easier to access data for deeper analysis. According to Merriam (1988), data analysis involves making sense of one's data, resulting in a narrative which makes sense to the reader (pp. 127- 130). Completing an intensive analysis of the data is important because the narratives often found in qualitative case studies can be criticized for being nothing more than "merely descriptive" (Merriam, 1988, p. 131). In order to transcend beyond the "merely descriptive," I began with the open coding process (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and then I conducted a second phase of analysis in which I applied a critical lens.

Creswell (1998) describes open coding as a process for categorizing the information and examining dimensions of the data. During open coding, I paid particular attention to any phrases or words that described school life and that particularly related to my research questions and sub-questions. As I moved through open coding I began to develop themes; as van Manen (1990) explains, "theme gives control and order to our research and our writing" (p. 79). I organized the data into themes by placing the aforementioned words and phrases onto separate individual index cards and labeling each with a developing theme. I carefully labeled the source from which the data came. Merriam (1988) compares this process to the task of categorically sorting food items from a grocery store, noting that this could be accomplished in a number of ways (p. 132-133); therefore, I continued to sort the index cards multiple times until developing themes reoccur and the process was exhausted. Borrowing from van Manen (1990), I used theme as a tool for getting at the meaning of the school-based learning experiences of my participants. The hermeneutical approach played a role as I "mined the meaning" from my participants' experiential accounts.

This first layer of analysis was hermeneutic because I focused on the significance that certain aspects of school-based experiences had for my participants. As an experienced scholar, Merriam (1988) advises researchers to strive towards fewer, more manageable numbers of themes in order to reflect a greater level of abstraction in data analysis. Keeping this in mind, I completed a final sort by labeling and color-coding the index cards into appropriately themed categories.

Once I completed the open-coding process and organized the emerging themes, I conducted a second layer of analysis and applied a critical lens. During this phase of analysis, I paid particular attention to any data that possibly contradicted everyday majoritarian narratives (Yosso, 2006). For example, Kasun (2013) describes how discourse can both limit and prescribe actions stating that, "discourses surrounding immigrants and the assumption of direct paths to assimilation create static and constricting approaches to how people are both expected to behave and how they even can imagine their set of choices for behaviors" (p. 229). During analysis, I looked for phrases that displayed such choices or imaginations of behavior by reading the data multiple times and by highlighting relevant words and phrases. As I applied a critical lens, LatCrit was used to understand how race and language play a role in the participants' lives. By conducting two layers of analysis I hoped to illuminate the experiences of my participants and examined racialized layers of meaning based on language and culture.

Tediously tending to the data also included conducting cross-case analysis. Cross-case analysis allowed me to analyze the data across cases in order to identify any similarities or differences (Yin, 2003). In other words, I utilized cross-case analysis to synthesize the individual cases. Engaging in this process further served my ability to engage in rich analysis. This process also added to the complexity of my hermeneutical understanding, "dynamically moving between part and whole" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 116), which better illuminated the findings. All of these steps were completed in order to conduct a rigorous and reliable data analysis.

Permissions

Before I began my research, I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission, and all district and building permissions that were required to conduct my study. I explained my research plan to parents in a letter that asked them to provide consent for their children to participate in my research. I asked a bilingual Spanish/English volunteer to translate the letter into the parents' primary language. Parents were informed that their consent is purely voluntary and that they may withdraw a child from the research at any time, without consequence. Finally, I explained my research plan to students and asked for participation consent by giving them a child assent form. I clearly explained that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time without consequence.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns must remain at the forefront when conducting qualitative research. Since I have discussed the necessary permissions that were needed for this study to take place, this section focuses more on authors whose works forced me to problematize my role as a researcher. In considering the methodological context for this study, I remained conscientious of my relationship with the participants in the study. This remained critically important because of my position as a teacher within the school, which placed me in an authoritative role as viewed by students. Although I sought participants through colleagues who taught at the intermediate site where this study took place, we were required to wear district identification at all times and we commonly identified one another as "teachers." Therefore, I anticipated that I would be introduced as such to my participants, even though I was not a teacher of my participants. Second, my interest in multilingual Latino/a students, who many consider a marginalized group, represented an ethical concern. This displayed an important consideration because, as the researcher, I am not ethnically a member of this group, which had the potential to hinder me from gaining the trust of participants. Third, my participants were children.

Besides gaining participants' trust, there was concern for my representation of them in my study. It may prove difficult to remain respectful of my student participants' racialized status.

In addition, I may struggle to authentically represent student participants' stories as an outside member. These challenges drove my fieldwork, conduct, interpretation, and self-reflexivity as I engaged in the totality of this research project. Stake (2005) characterizes qualitative researchers as "guests in the private spaces of the world" (p. 459). Because the design of my research included multilingual Latino/a students, I was constantly challenged to interpret the children's voices deeply enough to author them with sensitivity and accuracy. I am influenced by research and reflections of other scholars who work among children (Anzaldua, 1987; Barbieri, 2002; Habashi, 2010; Huber & Clandinin, 2002; Lareau, 2011), and I approached my work with the assumption that multilingual Latino/a students are marginalized by schooling. In an attempt to conduct and report an ethical study, I have tried to respect the students' voices while not giving up my own critical lens as a researcher.

Confidentiality represents a general concern when conducting qualitative research. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were utilized in field notes, in journals, and in the final write up. I also altered names of the particular school utilized in conducting my study. All participants, their parents, and school administrators were made aware of the confidentiality practices, which follow IRB and RCR regulations and allowed the participants to make an informed decision about participating in the study.

Trustworthiness

In this section I discuss some key elements I included, ensuring the overall quality of my qualitative study. Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest the use of member checking, researcher reflexivity, and triangulation as strategies to promote data credibility in a case study research design (p. 556). I used each of these strategies: first, I used member checks to increase the credibility of the qualitative research design. Merriam (2002) defines member checks as, "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if they were plausible" (p. 31). Credibility was also increased through prolonged engagement with my participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I spent six months engaged in data collection and engaged with my participants and I explicitly set a time to conduct member checks with my participants once all interviews had been transcribed. Second, I practiced reflexivity by keeping a research journal throughout the entire process. Preissle and Grant (2004) discuss reflexivity as "the field workers' self-conscious and critical study of their own standpoints and assumptions" (p. 175). By utilizing a research journal, I maintained a detailed account of the research process while recording any personal reactions through the process. Finally, I followed the credibility criteria for my study by using triangulation with the three data sources.

Miles and Huberman (1994) distinguish five types of triangulation, two of which applied to my study. The first type is triangulation by method, which uses analysis from the different data sources in an attempt to provide more detailed information about the topic under study. The second type is triangulation by theory, which uses more than one theoretical approach to interpret and support the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study used the strategy of triangulation by theory because I conducted two layers of analysis, interpretive and critical (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In discussing qualitative case studies, Stake (2005) considers triangulation as "a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p. 454). The use of member checking, researcher reflexivity, and triangulation supported the rigor and ethical conduct in my study.

It is also important to discuss the transferability of a qualitative research design. Guba and Lincoln (1989) recommend the technique of thick description for establishing transferability. As described by Guba and Lincoln (1989) thick description, "provides an extensive and careful description of the time, the place, the context, and the culture in which those hypothesis were found to be salient" (p. 241-242). To achieve transferability in my study, I included details about my participants and the setting in which my study took place. I also included details about my own perspectives on issues such as language, race, and power, and how they play out in the U.S. public school system. Thick description facilitated transferability judgments that others may wish to apply to their own work (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). All of the aforementioned strategies helped to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

This section discusses the methodology for this study, stating that interpretivism and Latino critical theory served as my theoretical foundation. All ethical considerations were given when selecting participants and collecting data. Data collection included observations, semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview and a drawing or writing prompt. Finally, I conducted two layers of analysis that included an open coding process to discover emerging themes and critical analysis that identified how race is played out in the school context. Cross-case analysis was utilized to identify the similarities and differences between and among cases.

CHAPTER IV

ADOLESCENT MEANDERINGS I: THE INDIVIDUAL TALES

My data analysis was divided into three separate chapters. I began by briefly describing the context of my study. I included the research site demographics and the population studied. In chapters four and five, I first provided a description of the participants in which I crafted out of my field notes and my research journal. I then presented two interpretations of these adolescent meanderings. The interpretive tale highlighted their learning needs and resources and the critical tale challenged the dominant discourse and further aided in my examination of how race played a role in their schooling experiences. My point in presenting the initial description first was not to control bias, but rather a way of making my values and assumptions visible to the reader (Scheurich, 1997), as well as an attempt to slightly immerse the reader into the innocently complex world of adolescence. Chapter six presents the cross-case analysis, in which four themes were presented, both interpretively and critically. Dividing the data analysis into three chapters allows the reader to follow my interpretation of the seven participants' school-based learning experiences more easily. Each chapter serves as an invitation to dwell in a clearing where race, language, culture, and schooling mingle.

In chapters four and five, I utilized a tale-telling approach (Woodbrooks, 1991) to present the data as two separate readings in an attempt to demonstrate the multiple ways in which data may be presented and analyzed. The first reading was interpretive, and therefore my intent was to understand and interpret my participants' experiential accounts. For the second reading, I applied a critical lens in which I sought "embedded influences that are not readily apparent" (Woodbrooks, 1991, p. 139-140). Chapter four presents the participants, Rosa, Alecia, and Miguel. I grouped these three particular participants into one chapter because they each explicitly identified with their ethnicity and they also each demonstrated a different mode of resistance. Chapter five presents the two tales of the remaining four participants.

Research Setting

This research study was in a large suburban school district serving approximately 1,669 second language students in which 40 languages were represented. The school site was an intermediate school with an enrollment of approximately 1,000 fifth and sixth grade students, and was one of only two schools within the entire district that was considered a Title I school, a national Free or Reduced Lunch Program. This means that the student population for this study came from low-income households and made up at least forty percent of the enrollment, thus allowing Title I funds to be used schoolwide and serve all students within the school. The ethnicities represented in the school site were 53% White, 9% Black, 14% Asian, 6% American Indian, 16% Hispanic, and 2% two or more race categories. Fourth graders from two elementary schools within the district merged into this particular intermediate site for their fifth and sixth grade school years. This was important because the student bodies from the two elementary schools were quite different from one another, resulting in a peculiar intersection of students and cultures. For example, one of the elementary schools housed a student body that was predominately White, upper-middle class; however, the other elementary school was a Title I school representing diverse socioeconomic status and ethnicities.

An accomplished suburban school district, the pride of the district's prominent reputation was evident through the school's general decorum. Like new carpets, furniture, walls, and bathroom tiles all displayed the school district's colors and the district mascot could be seen almost everywhere you turn, printed on the clocks on the walls to the soap dispensers in the restrooms. On any given school day, a handful of employees and students were displaying their school pride through t-shirts, jewelry, headbands, and scarves. If I had to describe my initial impression in just one phrase, it would be that everyday was a pep rally in which school spirit rang proud and true! Not unlike a small college campus, multiple buildings housed the daily activities of a typical school. The main school building was two-storied with a large media center that was centrally located on the first floor. The main hallway where the media center was located forked into two wings, a fifth grade wing and a sixth grade wing. The location of the sixth grade teachers and students was somewhat isolated from the rest of the school building. The hallways located in this part of the building felt as if they would continue on indefinitely, as if navigating a labyrinth. The cafeteria, nurse's office, music, and gymnasium were each located in their own, separate buildings on campus. Covered sidewalks lead to and from all of the buildings on campus with grassy areas and picnic tables sprinkled in between.

Population Studied

The participants in this study included seven adolescent sixth graders. Initially, I had eight participants but one student withdrew from school shortly after I began data collection. The five female participants and the two male participants chose which data piece (observations, individual interviews, writing or drawing prompt, focus group interview) they were willing to participate in on the assent form they were given. All of the participants marked that they were willing to participate in each of the data piece; however, only three participants completed the writing or drawing prompts. The main reasons given for not completing the prompts included too much homework and being too busy. Rosa, Miguel, and Carlos each completed the writing prompt. In fact, Rosa and Carlos included a drawing to accompany their writing. Due to the students' class schedules, Denise, Claudia, Miguel, and Carlos were selected to participate in the focus group interview. These students were on the same class rotation which made it conducive for me to complete the focus group interview during regular school hours. I have included a chart to illustrate each participant's involvement in the data piece:

Table 1. ***Participant's involvement in the data piece***

	Observations (2)	Individual Interviews (2)	Drawing Prompt (1)	Writing Prompt (1)	Focus Group Interview (1)
Rosa	x	x	x	x	
Denise	x	x			x
Claudia	x	x			x
Alecia	x	x			
Jasmyn	x	x			
Miguel	x	x		x	x
Carlos	x	x	x	x	x

The Interpretive Tales

Rosa: "Mexican like me"

A little rough around the edges, Rosa was quick to identify herself as Mexican. Her tall, strong build made her appear older than her current age of twelve; however, she remained playfully childish in her actions. For example, I observed her skipping down the hallway one afternoon. Also, during our interviews she would entertain her fingers by twirling a strand of her long, thick, course black hair and she often attached a petite giggle after her responses to my questions. Rosa was a bilingual Spanish-English speaker and enrolled into the district during the middle of her fourth grade year. Currently a sixth grader, she was labeled with the language designation of Fluent English Proficient (FEP) and was in her second year of monitoring status. She struggled with math and openly admitted to not always making the best grades but overall she had a good head on her shoulders. It wasn't uncommon for several of my participants to mention their friends throughout the interview process; however, when Rosa mentioned certain friends she immediately followed with statements such as, “Mexican like me” or “she’s American,” whereas most of the other participants rarely, if ever, voluntarily specified a specific ethnic identity when referring to their peers. Therefore, I want to honor the fact that Rosa’s ethnic identity, as well as the commonality with certain peers, seemed important to her.

Arriving a little after class started, I walked into the art room to observe Rosa sitting at a table with three other girls. The room had a significant smell of stale paint as if buckets of wet and washed paintbrushes had been left out to dry. Unlike other classrooms, the art room offered a free-spirited vibe with a few groups of students visiting at their tables or moving freely around the room. A radio in one corner played a local station quietly while the occasional sound of a chair scraped across the tile floor, leaving a small, black scuff. As I looked around the room to find an empty chair to sit in, I noticed art projects from the year on display. Black and white shadowing designs created by individual students were lined across one wall and oddly shaped objects covered with paper mache newspaper strips layed sprawled out on a table towards another corner of the room, a couple of chairs still stacked on the table. I envied the disorderly arrangement of the classroom environment while still managing proper student behavior; a comfort I never seemed to acquire as a teacher. A quick glance from the art teacher acknowledging my presence, I settled into a chair near the wall only a few feet away from the table at which Rosa sat.

“Yeah, I went every six weeks too,” I heard Rosa say as I tuned in to the middle of their conversation. The group of girls at the table had been talking about getting their braces off until they decided to “change the subject from teeth” because they had just come from lunch. The conversation moved from braces to high heels to a recent bus occurrence. Rosa abruptly got out of her chair and walked over to the art teacher. “What color should I use for my background?” she asked the teacher. Subtly observing her art project, I caught a glimpse of aqua and pink colors. I glanced around the room to see what the other students’ projects looked like and noticed that Rosa’s artwork didn’t seem to have as many details as her peers’. The art teacher told Rosa to “slow down and color in the opposite direction” as a gentle reminder of the instructions given for their “Radial Design” assignment. Rosa, seemingly pleased with her conversation with the teacher, smiled and skipped back to her seat and quietly continued to work. She was clearly delighted to be there.

The semester progressed and I had the opportunity to spend more time with Rosa. I first noticed that she talked a lot about her family, and when she described them, she did so with a practical tone. Rosa’s family had a uniquely supportive arrangement. Her parents worked together in the automobile business, buying, repairing, and selling cars; however, her mother and father were not together as a couple and lived in separate homes. Monday through Wednesday Rosa stayed with her dad, and from Thursday through Sunday she stayed with her mom. In describing a typical afternoon, she shared that her grandpa sometimes picked her up after school when her dad was out of town and her mom was working. Since they travelled to other school sites to pick up her siblings, she often completed her homework while in the car. Rosa shared that she cleans house after school, “we clean at both my mom’s and my dad’s… I do his laundry and then at my mom’s house I have a chore chart, and on Fridays I have to clean the kitchen.” When her homework was not completed in the car, her older sister sometimes helped her, “depending on what mood she is in” Rosa exclaimed while rolling her eyes. Otherwise she asked her dad for help if he was home. During our first interview, we discussed various school subjects, and she revealed her lack of confidence in the subject of math. Later on, in our second interview, I asked her how her homework was going. She looked down towards the floor and replied somberly, stating, “it’s hard… I think math is hard.”

The subject of math was obviously an uncomfortable endeavor for Rosa. She told me that math was usually the only subject she had homework in and when she did not understand it, she simply did not do it. She waited to seek help from the assistant math teacher during the next school day even though she knew the assistant teacher was not there all of the time. Rosa considered herself a focused student, but not always a good listener. She was easily distracted and admitted that when a lesson in class seemed hard she didn't pay attention, which often led to behavioral problems. In fact, she shared that teachers have moved her closer to their desks because of her being too noisy and quarreling with other students. Shrugging one shoulder she casually stated, "I'm always involved [in getting in trouble]." Although Rosa talked about a few friends, I rarely observed her interacting with peers other than the ones she sat near during my classroom observations. Unlike the other six participants who all seemed to have a familiarity with one another even outside of school, I began to wonder if Rosa was somewhat of an introvert, but she did have an energetic and bubbly personality. Perhaps she did not have much social capital since she was fairly new to the district.

Individualized Attention

Rosa described her frustration with student-teacher engagement while adding her preference for additional one-on-one support. She told me, "I don't really like the teachers that just say what you have to do and when you raise your hand, they'll help you a little bit but it doesn't really help." Although Rosa did not express fear of raising her hand and asking for help, she did allude to the fact that the results were often unhelpful. She needed someone to recognize her strengths and build her academic confidence through a more individualized approach. She recounted her experience at her old school telling me that,

> When I was at the other school, we used to get in trouble a lot and so that's why we had to come here. I wouldn't do my homework all of the time and I wouldn't, like, do work 'cause I really didn't understand it. But like here, they teach more, and like the assistant teachers and teachers will help individually.

Rosa's experience revealed how different schools provide different assistance and how important the role of school is in a student's learning experience. Courtney Cazden's (2001) notable work on classroom discourse reveals the importance of teacher and student obligations over control of the right to speak in traditional classrooms. She asserts that teachers have inherent rights due to their institutional roles but that silence or one-word responses from students should be considered carefully (p. 86). Rosa continued to talk about the type of student-teacher engagement she needed sharing that, “teachers should have helpers in the class.” She was the only participant in my study who admitted relying on the support of assistant teachers. Whether referring to her need for individualized support from her teachers or to an overall need of a reciprocal student-teacher relationship, Rosa seemed to have a history of struggles. Rosa’s completed writing prompt affirms this need as follows,

> When I was at school I was in 1st grade in Jones. It was in my music class and I had to go to the bathroom really bad but my music teacher didn’t let me go to the bathroom. Since I had to go, I went in my pants and my music teacher smelled it and started asking people. I was crying and so he called the nurses office and she called my mom. My mom picked me up from school and that was the worst day of school! (Rosa, writing prompt 10/2014)

Rosa’s writing was accompanied by a drawing of her teacher stating, “what smells?” and a drawing of her sitting in soiled clothes with squiggly lines to represent a bad odor emanating from her body.

Many times, I observed Rosa in classes with her head down, looking at her notebook, possibly doodling, appearing detached from the content being taught. The exception was Spanish class in which Rosa’s entire physical and mental state was involved in the class. Although her behavior sometimes exhibited signs of boredom, her entire posture and demeanor were completely different. Shoulders upright, hand constantly and anxiously waving in the air, she hoped the teacher would call on her. She was the academic star in Spanish class. I saw her lack of participation in her core academic classes as a result of giving up on seeking necessary help and support, rather than a lack of motivation or disinterest. Her elective classes, such as Art and Spanish, seemed to offer her an environment where she felt more comfortable to assert her needs. In her other classes, Rosa tried to communicate with her teachers; however, her teachers lacked the appropriate responses to meet Rosa’s particular learning needs. In one of our interviews, she expressed her desire to attend her sister's school, an alternative center, because of the small student to teacher ratio and the slower pace for learning. In describing the alternative center she said, "they gave my sister a computer so she can do her school work from home and over the summer." Rosa also needed to feel confident in herself so that she could successfully work independently. I viewed her sometimes disruptive behavior as a result of her lack of self-confidence, which produced a negative coping mechanism. Rosa struggled to find her place at school; although she admitted to acting out at times, she behaved as if her presence at school was somewhat detached. Tyrone Howard (2010) defines culturally responsive pedagogy as "a framework that recognizes the rich and varied cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills that students from diverse groups bring to schools… and a philosophical view of teaching that is dedicated to nurturing student well being" (p. 67-68). Rosa would benefit from the empowerment and personal efficacy that culturally responsive pedagogy offers but it was not always implemented.

Towards the end of my data collection with Rosa, I realized she often squinted her eyes when she looked at the white board or when she read something at her desk. I mentioned this to her homeroom teacher, but I was never able to follow up. I often wondered if she needed glasses and if her eyesight hindered her learning in any way. Since Rosa was fairly new to the school district, unlike many of the other participants who had been in the district for most of their schooling, one of the last questions I asked was what she most looked forward to this year. I assumed this was her last year in the current school building, and she would be anticipating her move to the middle school next year. We sat at a small, round table at the end of a hallway. She looked away, distracted by a group of students who were transitioning locations at the other end of the hallway. I observed her as she sat leaned back in her chair, one foot shaking rhythmically while resting on the opposite knee. Finally, she turned her head to face me and said, uninterestingly, "oh, uh, I don't know… not really anything."

In her exploration of the hermeneutical aesthetics of thick description, Melissa Freeman (2014) poses that there isn't, necessarily, a guide to follow while Geertz (1973) exclaims, "there is only the informal logic of actual life that presents itself to us interpretively for us to venture in and attend to" (p. 17). Through my hermeneutic explorations of Rosa's school-based experiences, I think Rosa needed individualized attention from her teachers to help her with her school work. A similar finding in Balagna, Young, and Smith's (2013) study revealed that extra help with school work was a need expressed in the Latino/a learners involved in their study. She also needed social capital with her peers. Out of all seven of my participants, Rosa was the newest member to the school district, which at the time data analysis was conducted, placed Rosa in the district for almost two years. Although she talked about having friends, she did not seem as integrated into the school culture as much as my other participants did. Ricardo D. Stanton-Salazar (2004) discusses social capital among minority students stating that, "attachment to peer groups properly 'integrated' not only provides ready access to the emotional and psychological resources derived from friendship and group membership but also provides for the accommodation to norms necessary for school achievement" (p. 22). Given more time to build peer social capital, I wondered if Rosa's academic experiences at school might improve.

Hard Worker

Rosa came to school with a willingness to work. She was usually prepared and eager to continue her assignments by working one on one with an assistant teacher or classroom teacher. In an oddly, insightful way, Rosa recognized the demands placed on teachers with larger class sizes and pressures from the standardized testing environment that engenders public schools today. The empathy she felt for her teachers often resulted in placing her own academic needs last. In a conversation about classrooms she said, "it would be easier for the students and easier for the teachers… because, if a teacher has a lot of students, it's hard to stop the lesson and help the kids that need help."

Although Rosa was familiar with her weakness in math, she was in tune to the kind of learner she was. She liked frequent breaks, and preferred hands on activities. She was especially frustrated by the monotony of many of her classes and openly admitted to becoming bored when they were required to sit and take notes in class. One of her favorite classes was geography and she "likes learning about maps." She had an impressive academic language vocabulary, a skill that is often lacking in ESL students at any level. On a particularly sunny afternoon, we discussed her classes and she expressed preference for the subjects of Social Studies and Geography. Rosa was in a cheerful mood and stated, "I like learning about longitude and latitude." I was impressed with the use of her vocabulary.

Rosa also participated in a highly disciplined extracurricular activity, karate. She demonstrated some of the karate moves she knew and liked that karate was more of an individual sport. Her abilities both in and out of school flourished when working more intimately with an instructor. Rosa came from a home that valued hard work and mutual support of one another as a key to survival. Although she wanted to be an attorney when she grows up, attending college was not something she talked much about with her family. Her family seemed to focus on the day-to-day demands of life, leaving little time to focus on the future. Some of the activities Rosa enjoyed doing with her family included staying home to watch a movie and travelling to Branson for a summer vacation. She shared with me that the last movie she watched was *Instructions Not Included*, a 2013 Mexican comedy/drama film about a male bachelor who unexpectedly learns he is a father and ends up having to raise his daughter. Although Rosa experienced frustration with her schoolwork, she was a hard working student who perceived herself with a future in helping others.

Rosa was a hard worker, a necessary resource that aided her in her ability to progress through school. She recalled a history of communication struggles with different teachers in various schools yet she remained willing to work hard. Characterized as resilience by some scholars (Sosa, 2012), Rosa's work ethic was strong and well intentioned. Finally, in relation to Rosa's needs and the resource she brought to school, her hard work needed more recognition in the context of school.

Alecia: A Whimsical Kind of Studious

Articulate and curious, Alecia had an impressive awareness of herself. She was a straight A student who loved band and was involved in multiple extra-curricular academic clubs. Often wearing pants that were too short, Alecia could be found circulating the hallways taking care of important tasks for her teachers. In fact, one day I ran into her in the hallway as I was on my way to meet another student. I overheard her tell the school counselor that she was one of my "experiments." I cringed and giggled simultaneously. Throughout our interviews, she often adjusted her thick, purple, rimmed glasses that slid down her nose ever so slightly. Paired with her goofy laugh, Alecia was the only participant who clearly articulated the ethnic identity of herself and her family. She explained to me that her parents were Mexican but she was Latina because she was U.S. born. Interesting, since many other participants seemed somewhat indifferent about their ethnic identities. Alecia had been in the district since pre-kindergarten and although she was a bilingual Spanish-English speaker, she admitted that she understood Spanish much better than she could speak it. Eleven years old and in the sixth grade, Alecia had a language designation of FEP and had officially exited out of the ELL program. Meaning that, she had tested out of the ELL program and the two years of monitoring had expired. She regularly attended church on Wednesdays and strolled through daily life with a constant glitter of wonder in her eyes.

Alecia was the only girl in a group with two other male students. The class was working on a grade level service learning project in which classes had been collecting soda tabs. The classroom expelled chatters of students counting their tabs as delicate clanks prickled the air, similar to the sound of coins hitting one another when dispensed out of a coin machine. My first observation of Alecia was in her study hall class as she carefully counted her soda tabs by sliding them across her desk into groups of ten. She was precise and meticulous, and I was amazed that she kept track of the count while holding a minor argument with a peer in the group. The teacher played rock music quietly through a computer for background noise. Alecia continued to converse with her male counterparts, and I found myself feeling satisfied to observe a young girl voicing her perspective, unwaveringly, towards the two male students sitting across from her. My impressions of her led me to refer to the literature on the role of gender and ethnicity. Scholars have suggested that due to the combination of racism and sexism, girls are more likely than boys to experience discrimination based on both gender and ethnicity, thus anticipate more barriers to obtaining their educational goals (McWhirter, 1997). Others have furthermore asserted that adolescent females, compared to their male counterparts, are more realistic and active in planning their career goals (Patton & Creed, 2002). Others have concluded that girls are actively encouraged to achieve academically in order to overcome obstacles and to be independent (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005). As a bit more time passed, I began to wonder if Alecia had the reputation of a "know it all." These first few moments of observing Alecia proved to take heed of my first impressions of her. Once I became more familiar with Alecia, though, I experienced her as highly driven to learn new things while exulting a small amount of impatience with peers who do not show the same amount of inquisitiveness for learning as she does.

When I asked Alecia what she looked forward to this year, she expressed her excitement for joining band and learning how to play the flute. On several occasions I saw Alecia fully engaged in learning tasks at school, and she always presented focus and effort in the classroom. Her response to a question about after school confirmed her efforts during the school day, as she was the only participant to admit that she "just wants to rest for a little bit" after a long, demanding day. She liked to watch television after school but also admitted that she practiced her flute for twenty minutes daily at home. Alecia's parents were both in the home, along with a fifteen-year-old brother and a seven-year-old sister, all of who attended school in the district. When she talked about her family, she said her parents "kind of work a lot" but that they were able to arrange their work schedules so that at least one of the parents was home with the children at all times. In talking with Alecia about her family, it was evident that she was well supported and nurtured. On one occasion she shared that she hoped to visit her extended family in Mexico some day, relatives she had yet to meet. She was interested in learning about her family's Mexican cultural heritage. Other than a couple of brief conversations Alecia did not mention her family often; she mostly enjoyed talking about herself and her learning interests.

Academically, Alecia loved school and all of her classes. She hesitated to say anything negative about her classes or teachers, and she had an overall interest in most subjects. Alecia sometimes took her academics and classroom interactions too seriously. I wrote in the margins of my field journal "lighten up" and "relax" during a couple of classroom observations. Alecia, looking at me through her purple-rimmed glasses, elaborated on the purpose of school stating,

> To me the purpose of school is to learn and get along with other people or like whenever you're all grown up and you have to go out into the world by yourself, like you already know how to do checks and balances and you get along with more people.
> To me, that's the meaning of school or like to get yourself prepared for the outside world.

To reiterate Alecia's last line, "to get yourself prepared for the outside world," what becomes evident here is the clear message sent to kids about the purpose school serves. Nel Noddings (2003) examines this idea in her book, *Happiness and Education*, in which she advocates for childhood being more than preparation for adulthood. On another occasion I observed Alecia becoming slightly agitated with a couple of classmates who were talking while the teacher was explaining something to the class. Alecia glared at them, saying "sh-sh," and shook her head in annoyance as she turned her attention back to the teacher. At the time the teacher was simply reviewing the expected classroom procedures for the last ten minutes of class that day-information I would not have considered critical. Alecia, however, was not one to miss a single piece of information, no matter the topic, and she always desired to be viewed as a good student by her teachers. For example in my observation of her in a band class, I noted that she held perfect posture while playing her flute and that she continued to sight read with other instrument groups, even though she did not have to. She also connected being a good student to later in life stating that,

> Being a great student means later in life you'll be very successful and like you already know many things so probably once you have kids you could teach them to get them an early education for them to be a better student at school too.

Although Alecia never seemed arrogant, I sensed that overall she felt an utter ridiculousness towards many of her peers.

Informal Engagement at School

Alecia especially liked to please her teachers and quite possibly any other authority figure. I saw this drive to be an overachiever as a product of her need to please. For instance, I asked her if she completed the writing or drawing prompt I gave her the last time we met, and she clearly became disappointed in herself and appeared embarrassed because she had not completed it. As much as I assured her that there was no pressure to complete it, she was determined to do so stating, "no, I could do it still." Alecia was also proud to say, "I have all A's at school and in all of my subjects," and expressed her desire "to be a straight A student this whole year." When I asked her if she ever experienced too much pressure to do well in school, she responded with a matter of fact "no" as a confused frown fell upon her face. It was as if she couldn't imagine not striving to have straight A's. Although Alecia enjoyed pleasing her teachers and the recognition she received for her accomplishments, she also needed confirmation that she didn't always have to strive to be perfect at everything all of the time. I experienced Alecia as needing less academic support from her teachers and more informal interactions. In a discussion on interpersonal growth, Noddings' (2003) makes a valid point stating that, "it is easier for elementary school teachers to get to know their students than it is for middle and high school teachers" (p. 185) and although she discusses various arrangements that attempt to provide continuity to build personal relationships at the middle and high school levels, she concludes that teachers know very little about their students as persons. Although Alecia spoke positively about her teachers and further emphasized that, “teachers are great people to talk to whenever you have problems;” however, she needed to interact with her teachers in a less structured, less formalized manner, to help her feel more relaxed in a way that she does not feel the need to perform her best.

When I asked Alecia what she needed from school she mostly referred to social engagement with her peers. I attempted to have her focus on specific learning needs, but it was evident she did not view herself as needing support. Alecia desired to spend more time socializing with her friends from the previous year. She missed them, and the organization and structure of lunch breaks in the current school year had separated her from a group of girls that she enjoyed. Her parents limited her social activities outside of school to the point of near nonexistence; therefore, school was often the only opportunity Alecia had to engage in unstructured, social interactions with her friends.

Fairness was also important to Alecia. She wanted teachers to treat students fairly when it came to grading and turning in assignments. She described one classroom’s policy for missing assignments, telling me that the teacher tells a student who misses an assignment to “sign the book;” however, she said sometimes the teacher forgets to tell a student to sign the book, or the student does not sign the book, which she feels is not fair. Alecia needed a classroom environment where everyone put their fair share of effort into things and received equal recognition for those efforts.

Finally, Alecia discussed being unable to rely on her parents for help with homework because of a language barrier. Although I personally hesitate to frame Alecia’s parents language skills and her own bilingual abilities as problematic, I am only following the perspective of Alecia as she articulated, “homework is kind of a problem, because like, my parents they don’t understand it that well so I just Skype with my friends and ask them for help.” I asked Alecia to explain if her parent’s lack of understanding was because of a language barrier or because of her parent’s educational levels. With raised eyebrows she lifted her right hand and nudged the center of her glasses to sit in their correct position as she thought about her response. She breathed in and continued, “well, we speak Spanish at home. My dad knows how to read a little in English and they both know how to speak in English a little bit, but they’re still learning.” Pausing for a moment of consideration, she continued:

> My parents will have to learn English because my little sister doesn’t speak Spanish. She speaks only English. That makes me sad for her. She doesn’t want to learn Spanish. My parents don’t like it but they get used to it.

Alecia acknowledged the homework challenges she and her sister faced at home while also recognizing the sacrifices her parents faced with her sister’s loss of the Spanish language. As Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernhard, and Freire (2001) explain, “the loss of the home language is likely to have profound effects on the children’s academic achievement but also on the family’s ability to nurture their children and familial relations” (p. 116).

Driven and Dedicated

Alecia was both eager to please and eager to achieve to the best of her abilities. Alecia was not only driven to do well on her assignments and classroom performance, she was also committed to various club organizations the school had to offer. Creative, observant, and thorough, she was an asset to any club. She particularly enjoyed the school’s community service group because the students were challenged with coming up with new project ideas each year. Alecia felt proud to be part of an organization that “makes a difference.” Any student who was part of this club also needed parents who were supportive and able to transport their child before and after regular school hours. With the support of her parents, Alecia was a dedicated member to the club. For example, they held club meetings once a week before school started. In discussing the requirements for being part of such a club she said, “my parents have to drop me off at 7:05 a.m.” Alecia recognized that without the support of her parents she would not be able to participate in extra activities.

Alecia’s parents supported her in many ways, especially when it came to anything school related. She came from a caring home where learning was valued. Alecia’s family made school related events a priority, supporting her siblings as well. Because of Alecia's love for band class, we talked about it often. I asked her if she would have a concert at some point during the school year and if she looked forward to performing in front of a live audience. I also asked if her parents were likely to attend such an event. She admitted to being a little nervous about performing in the winter concert and confirmed that her parents would indeed attend. Crossing her arms across her chest, she jokingly said, "they've attended all of my brother's violin concerts so they better attend mine!" Her parents' support gave her an exceptional confidence that afforded Alecia the ability to try new experiences.

In summary, I observed Alecia as needing to relax about her academic performance. She needed to experience the kind of interactions with her teachers that allowed for more informal and personal engagement, preferably on a daily basis. Alecia needed to experience her teachers in such a way where she did not feel the need to perform for them. Because of Alecia's drive to perform her best, she was a stellar student and one that her teachers could rely on. Her academic drive and her commitment to the various clubs she was involved in were all valuable resources she brought to school. Although I have framed Alecia's needs and resources as such, the two could easily be interchangeable. For example, the intensity she brings to her academics could be viewed as a resource, rather than a need for confirmation. Furthermore, her bilingual abilities and family's home language of Spanish could easily be framed as a resource. As I discussed it here, however, the lack of her parent's English fluency is problematic for Alecia when she needs homework help.

Miguel: Man of the House

A short and handsome twelve-year old, Miguel had a boastful strut in which his pleasantly confident personality paired well with. Always well put together with his shirt tucked in, a belt around his waist, and styled hair that obviously required hair product, Miguel took himself quite seriously. The dimples appearing on his cheeks when he smiled gave him a boyish appearance that skillfully concealed the mature, responsible gentlemen underneath. Although he was often teased about his height, Miguel was well respected by his peers and his teachers. In fact, he shared a story about how his peers nicknamed him “Mini-man” in fifth grade and how his nickname became a source of encouragement when everybody started chanting it in gym class one day when it was his turn to run, jump up, and grab a pole; an act he had never been able to achieve. He spoke with a Latin accent and was in the dual language program, a language program the district offers. He was labeled as an FEP, in his second year of monitoring status.

His best friend was Carlos, the only other male participant in my study. The two boys have been friends since second grade when Miguel was first enrolled in the district. As Miguel put it, “he [Carlos] was the one who helped me out when I first came here.” Both Miguel and Carlos spoke a lot about each other during my interviews with each of them, demonstrating just how much they meant to one another. At one point, Miguel compared his family to Carlos’s, describing Carlos’s as “really calm” and his own as “not being able to get any peace.” Miguel came from a large family with three sisters and one brother, and besides one older sister, was one of the oldest children in the family. During our second interview Miguel was comfortable enough to tell me about a confidential situation involving his dad and the reason his dad was currently not in the home. When Miguel spoke of his dad, he spoke with respect and admiration while also recognizing his mistakes. He spoke of the life lessons his dad had taught him, such as “show no fear,” which he referred to a lot during some of the bullying stories that came out of our interviews. Throughout my encounters with Miguel, he continually spoke highly of his father while also recognizing his father’s faults. I got a sense that he credits his father’s faults as well as his advice for becoming the kind of man Miguel strives to be. He described his dad:

> My dad likes to stand up for me. I love it when he does because he is short like me, but at the same time, he’s straight [a good person]. This is the one reason that, now, I show no fear to anybody, even if they are like twice my size.

Miguel prided himself on being strong and responsible, both at school and at home. He was *the man of the house*. Meaning that, he considered it his responsibility to look after his mom and siblings while his dad was gone.

Relaxed, comfortable, and confident, Miguel navigated school life easily. He "has lots of friends" and was proud of who he was as an individual in this world. Miguel was easy to get to know and always eager to visit with me. I experienced Miguel as an individual who was proud of his Mexican heritage and who saw his bilingualism as an asset. When I asked, Miguel said he wanted to be either a doctor or a lawyer when he grew up. He never elaborated as to why he would like those careers or never alluded to any particular influences for his interest in those careers. He spoke of his siblings, especially the younger ones, much like a parent would with respect, admiration, and pride. He took pride in all aspects of his life, and he viewed any challenges he and his family had overcome as personally strengthening. He shared stories of his family's history, in particular his mother's educational history. He respectfully recounted:

> My mom started school in Mexico but she had to drop out to help my grandma take care of her siblings so she didn't finish school. So even when I would ask her questions about my homework and she could understand some of the English, she still couldn't understand the work and she would tell me to ask my sister. Like, she uses the calculator all of the time and I tell her she is never gonna learn like that! Well anyway, she was taking [ESL] classes to go to school, and she registered, but it was in English and on the first day she couldn't handle it, so she is going to sign up for the Spanish classes. Anyway, on the first couple of days she was asking me questions and I was helping her a lot with her homework.

Miguel's story not only demonstrated the pride and respect he felt for his family but also how the roles were reversed as Miguel held more of the knowledge and taught his mother. Overall, he enjoyed school and navigated school life easily. Always eager to talk about himself, Miguel mostly liked to tell me about playing soccer. He played on a recreational soccer team that practiced every Tuesday and Thursday after school and held games on Saturdays.

On a chilly, Fall afternoon I waited for Miguel to return to the main building from lunch. I stood just inside the entrance to the sixth grade wing and could hear the chatter of students approaching the heavy metal doors. Because of their weight, the doors opened slowly as the stampede of students forced their way into the building at the earliest hint of an opening in the doors. Somewhat obnoxious and redolent of the outdoors, I watched the sea of adolescent boys and girls pass by while keeping watch for Miguel. As I spotted him, he gave me a confident nod of acknowledgment and trotted towards me tracking the crisp fall leaves that managed to whirl into the hallway with the brisk, North wind. Breathing heavily Miguel wiped small beads of sweat from his hairline as we walked over to a round table a few feet down the hallway. Settling into our seats and waiting for the hallways to clear out and become quiet, I asked Miguel for updates since the last time we had met. Almost immediately, as his chest confidently lifted, he said, “I scored a goal in Saturday’s game!” I prompted him to tell me more about his game in an attempt to allow the interview to feel more conversational while easing into some of the interview questions I had in mind. Surprised by Miguel’s attention to detail, he created an almost picturesque account of his soccer game and the very moment he scored a goal. Until then I had experienced Miguel as a task master. He was prompt, efficient, and liked to check off tasks when completed; however, listening to him tell a story allowed a discrete, almost unidentified skill to materialize. I wondered if he enjoyed writing but recalled that Social Studies and Science were his favorite subjects. For a self-described “non-writer” Miguel was a wonderful storyteller.

Respectful Relationships and Accepted Mistakes

I regarded Miguel as a good student whose teachers often praised his confidence in daily classroom tasks. It was not apparent if his teacher’s recognized or accepted his ethnic pride, however. When I asked him what he needed from school, he struggled to think of an answer and turned his attention on himself stating, “I feel like I pay attention in school and utilize my teachers for help." I experienced Miguel as fearful of appearing weak or vulnerable. It was as if he was fixed in a robust mode that wouldn't allow a moment of frailty. Although Miguel clearly experienced positive feedback for his maturity and responsibility, I viewed this constant feedback, whether from teachers, peers, or family, as adding to the pressure he harbored to become a strong man. Miguel's rationale for his favorite position in soccer being "center mid" was a good example of this self-inflicted pressure. Miguel told me he liked the center, mid-field position because he can "help out in all areas." Miguel needed to know that he did not have to be strong, responsible, or mature all of the time.

At school, Miguel took on a role similar to how he described his father. He boasted:

> I don't like being nosey but at the same time I don't like to just sit there. When I see somebody that is getting picked on I jump in. I'm not saying this in a tough guy way, but like in fifth grade I didn't show fear to anybody and now I get lots of respect from lots of people.

Miguel's expression of his identity at school is that of leader and protector, an identity that fits comfortably into the social norms of masculinity. In considering Miguel's strong expression of his masculine identity, I considered the literature on the topic of *machismo*. In basic terms, *machismo* is a term that has been used to describe traditional masculine gender norms specific to Latinos. *Machismo* has often been characterized in the literature as hyper-masculine behavior and attitudes that have led to negative stereotypes about Latino men (Sparacho & Spodek, 2008; Torres et al., 2002); however, other studies have attempted to characterize more positive aspects of *machismo*. Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani, and Seaton (2004) focus on understanding hyper-masculinity behavior and attitudes as risk and resilience to specific high-risk contexts, societal expectations of masculinity, or particular social structures such as unemployment, racism, or culture. They furthermore state that, "masculine norms tend to discourage the display of vulnerability; consequently, many adolescent males adopt a presentation of self that may seem confident and stable when in fact, internally, this may not be the case" (Spencer et al., 2004, p.

234). In a study of *machismo* among various ethnic groups, James A. Neff (2001) described the positive characteristics of *machismo* as highly empathetic, kind, emotionally expressive, thoughtful, and understanding. I experienced Miguel's masculine gendered identity as possessing both the traditional norms as well as some of the more positive, sensitive characteristics. I sensed his liking to a masculine identity early on in data collection as it was expressed in different ways throughout. For example, one of Miguel's elective classes, which I observed him in, was a Percussion class. In my observation notes I wrote that the class was mostly boys, with only two girls. His gendered identity is supported by the majority of his narratives, which often referred to "standing up" for a peer or being "overprotective" of his sisters because his dad was currently living outside of the home. He needed a place where he could safely and without judgment be weak, irresponsible, and immature. Miguel needed to experience being a kid without holding any responsibilities.

Academically, Miguel enjoyed hands on learning. He liked to build things and expressed that there were only a few times at school where they experienced building or learning with manipulatives. In fact he shared that his reason to look forward to high school was because his older sister had told him that she got to "build a float" in one of her classes. It was obvious that Miguel preferred to learn by doing. Miguel also preferred teachers who were "relaxed" and "laid back." Not surprisingly, he did not like his classes with "strict" teachers. He wanted teachers whom he felt held a mutual respect between students and teachers. In her notable work, Valenzuela (1999) considers how Latino/a students often place emphasis on the relations between teachers and students. Miguel, as strong and tough as he liked to appear, completed a touching story in the writing prompt about his best day of school and thus illustrated an example of reciprocity between a teacher and student.

> My best day of school was when I was in 5th grade when the best teacher in the world gave me all of her candies that she got for Christmas. Well, it was a couple of weeks before Christmas and I gave her my gift that I had got for her. It was a Bible verse on a

> key chain. She said out of all of them she loved that one the most! I was walking back from lunch and she was waiting for me by my locker. She told me to open my locker. I was nervous. I thought I was in BIG trouble! I opened my locker and BAM! Reeses, M&M's, chocolate, and mints! All of her presents were in my locker and she wanted me to keep them. She also got me a turkey for Christmas. She said she wanted me to keep it and she said she loved me. (Miguel, writing prompt, 2015)

In a follow-up conversation with Miguel, I asked him to explain about the turkey he mentioned in his completed writing prompt. He told me the school had a program around the holidays where families could purchase traditional holiday meals for other families who may not be able to afford it, which is what his teacher had done for Miguel and his family. Reading Miguel's last sentence made me chuckle the first time I read it because I was so accustomed to observing and listening to a popular, young man boast his strength and perseverance. Although I knew he was also a caring gentleman, to hear him admit and accept the love from a teacher was satisfying. He didn't have this relationship with all of his teachers, and respect was an important value to Miguel.

Peer Mediator

Miguel arrived at school confident and ready to face whatever the day had to offer. I observed Miguel as engaged while listening, and participating in all of his classes. He moved with ease between the Spanish and English languages. He was also capable of producing content, academic language in English; a skill many second language learners struggle to acquire. For example, when he told me about his elective class, he used vocabulary such as "percussion" and "xylophone." I was most astonished by his application of discernment in personal situations. In a conversation about racism, he admitted to becoming offended by comments made about Mexicans but quickly added, "it's the tone that is used that makes it offensive or not," as he thought about it. I experienced Miguel as always seeing the good in people.

Miguel had discovered the benefits of punctuality with his schoolwork. His weekends and several school nights were filled with soccer; therefore, Miguel completed his homework "as soon as possible after school." With a supportive family, Miguel and his four siblings helped one another with homework when needed. Miguel returned home to a fully cooked "homemade meal" every day after school, sharing that his mom enjoyed cooking and that they often ate early because of the multiple after school activities Miguel and his siblings attended. Miguel was living in a single parent home at the time I conducted my data analysis, yet his mother was able to maintain a consistent environment. Miguel's mother saw the U.S. as an opportunity for her children to get the education that she never could. She was encouraging and supportive while highly valuing the education Miguel and his siblings received. Miguel described school as,

> A really great help to kids to get you a lot of education and it can help you a lot in the future, like if you dropped out of school or something it would be really hard for you to get a job.

He furthermore recognized the value in perseverance in school stating that, "you just have to keep going, so like if you want something [a healthier life], you have to, like, keep going." This support from home was obvious in Miguel's popularity at school with both students and teachers. His mom attended as many school functions as she could and made an effort to communicate with Miguel's teachers.

Knowing that Miguel viewed himself as a leader, I was not surprised to hear him talk about how he handled conflict with and between his peers. He recounted a time when a younger peer endured bullying stating, "I asked the boy if he was okay and I told him to let me know when they [the bullies] hurt you or to tell an adult." The issue of bullying was a favored topic for Miguel. Throughout our interviews, he continued to share specific stories about bullying. Miguel shared a personal story:

> Well yesterday I got punched in the stomach by a fourth grader on the bus. I was sitting with my friend and he [fourth grader] tried to tell me to move out of my seat but I was standing up so he couldn't move into my seat and then he punched me. I was mad and I

> would've punched him back but I thought about it super fast and just gave him a dirty look.

I commended Miguel for stopping to think about his own reaction in the situation and asked how he might avoid another confrontation with the fourth grader on the bus. Miguel continued,

> I won't ignore him next time… we've been having problems. He will like push me in line and I just get back in my spot and then he'll start shoving me. I tell him to back up and he just says he's not scared of me. He also follows my friend everywhere and my friend doesn't want to be rude and tell him [fourth grader] to go away, so he just keeps following him around everywhere. Then one day he was playing around and he poked my friend with a mechanical pencil and my friend started bleeding!

Miguel had a good sense of humor and a keen talent for mediating conflicts between his peers, all of which made him an asset to his school community.

Overall, I considered Miguel both socially and academically successful at school. I experienced Miguel as needing school to be a place where he was allowed to be vulnerable enough to make mistakes, rather than feeling that he always needed to be a responsible leader. Miguel's home life, although positive and nurturing, was a place of substantial responsibility for him and this mode of behavior often transferred to school. Although responsibility at school is viewed as a positive asset, Miguel needed school to be a place where the pressure of being so responsible was lessened. He also placed high value on his relationship with his teachers and needed mutual respect within such relationships.

Miguel was a high achieving student and a good problem solver when dealing with conflict between his peers. His mother placed emphasis on U.S. education which transferred to Miguel placing high value on education as well and allowed him to set goals for staying in school and persevering through challenges.

This chapter thus far presented my hermeneutical interpretations of the individual cases of participants Rosa, Alecia, and Miguel. In my first layer of analysis, I attempted to understand the everyday lives of my participants through a hermeneutical approach that aimed to find various meanings. In summary, Rosa identified strongly with her Mexican identity and performed better in school with individualized help from school staff when it was available. She was a hard worker who willingly attempted to communicate with her teachers in attempts to have her needs met, but often resulted in the lack of appropriate responses from her teachers. Alecia was a studious student who needed more informal interactions with her teachers. Although a language barrier sometimes prevented her from receiving homework help from her parents, she remained resourceful and dedicated to her schoolwork and other school activities. Finally, Miguel took pride in his Mexican heritage and viewed himself as a leader both at home and at school. He navigated school life easily and mediated conflicts with ease. Respect was an important factor in his relationships with both his peers and his teachers. He expressed a strong masculine identity that sometimes prevented him from being vulnerable or comfortable in making mistakes.

Next, I present the second layer of analysis in which I re-read and applied a critical lens to the three participants, Rosa, Alecia, and Miguel. To reiterate, these three particular participants were grouped together and presented in one chapter because of their explicit identification with their ethnic identity as well as the various modes of resistance that were revealed in the critical tale.

The Critical Tales

Rosa: Resistance as Survival

From the beginning of data collection and throughout the entire process, Rosa remained the most assertive in expressing her Mexican identity out of all of my participants. She immediately labeled herself as “Mexican” and often referred to the ethnic identity of her peers without being prompted. She also expressed her ethnicity through assignments, particularly in her artwork. Through the racialized experiences of her parents in the U.S. legal system, she desired to become an attorney in order to improve legal situations in the U.S. for people like them. The significance in Rosa’s narrative of agency was reflected as a shift in personal growth due to her desire to change society. She struggled in school both behaviorally and academically and often consciously chose not to complete her assignments. Thus, I considered literature on cultural opposition, more particularly school resistance, as I applied a critical lens to Rosa's school experiences.

The literature on school resistance is well known through the educational research community through the notions of John Ogbu's notable scholarship on cultural diversity and minority education experience, as well as through Henry Giroux's contributions in critical pedagogy. Other scholars continue to further develop, transform, and adapt resistance theories (Fernandez, 2002; McLaren, 1993; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Yosso, 2000; Yosso, 2006). Borrowing from Peter McLaren (1994), theories of resistance relate to an understanding of the complexities of culture to explain the relationship between schools and the dominant society. Furthermore, "resistance theories demonstrate how individuals negotiate and struggle with structures and create meanings of their own from these interactions" (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 315). Central to LatCrit theory is the centrality of experience and therefore Latino/a resistance of any kind must be examined at the intersection of language, culture, and race. I hope to provide a general explanation of school resistance as it fits with LatCrit theory in an attempt to offer yet another tale of Rosa's school-based experiences.

I read Rosa's overall attitude and observed demeanor as a form of resistance towards her admittedly difficult academic subjects. For example, I noted the difference in her body language in Spanish class versus her body language in Math class. She developed a strong aversion towards math, and her disengaged demeanor made it evident. The English language proficiency did not appear to be an issue for Rosa; however, the academic content language affiliated with certain subjects might have affected her demeanor. Due to Rosa's disengagement in certain classes, she sometimes misbehaved, resulting in disciplinary action. I considered other reasons that would compel Rosa to make such choices when she clearly expressed a desire to perform well in school and hold aspirations for the future. Rosa's discomfort with certain academic subjects seemed to cause avoidance and acting out in class with her peers. Rosa regularly showed up to school with incomplete homework assignments. Such behaviors are rarely, if ever, acceptable in the context of school. Upon re-examination of Rosa's experiences through resistance and oppositional behavior, I found that Rosa's behavior related to what Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal (2001) consider *self-defeating resistance* and is noted as "the traditional notion of school resistance" (p. 317). Examples of such resistance include students who engage in behavior that helps "re-create the oppressive conditions from which it originated" (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 317). On the surface, it is easy to pair Rosa's behavior with the stereotypical Mexican student with behavioral issues and low value of education; however, by examining her experiences through resistance, I interpreted Rosa's behaviors as a response to cultural dominance.

In general, resistance is an oppositional response to the dominant culture in order to preserve one's sense of identity. Borrowing from Dennis Heaton (2013), resistance can be a model for understanding student behavior. In her study on Chicano student perception of discipline, Rosa Hernandez Sheets (2002) found that, "teachers… often failed to capture the nuance and meaning of disciplinary events" (p. 109). Her findings also pointed to Chicano student participants' feelings of alienation because of their perspective that teachers did not take the time to really listen to the issues important to students. In my study, alienation was also present in Rosa's experiences. Rosa expressed feelings that teachers could not help her when she said, "I don't really like the teachers that just say what you have to do… when you raise your hand, they'll help you a little, but it doesn't really help." Rosa depended on the school to help her with schoolwork because she could not always get the help she needed at home.

The cultural system of her school ignored the cultural system of her home where language and socio-economic factors related to the kind of help available to Rosa. I used the research by Pierre Bourdieu (1973) and Paul Willis (1981) to consider resistance and the economic class system. Rosa's parents were part of the working-class, wherein Bourdieu's theory is based on the assumption that, "the culture of the dominant class is transmitted and rewarded by the educational system" (In Dumais, 2002, p. 44). In Rosa's case, I experienced her as intentionally resisting both academic and behavioral norms as a response to schooling that failed to meet her needs and did not recognize the conflict between the cultural capital for which the educational school system is based and the social class of her family. From a critical stance, resistance becomes a site for understanding how students, particularly Latino/a students, counteract the conditions and results of ineffective educational practices.

Alecia: Resistance as *Proving them Wrong*

In re-reading Alecia's school-based experiences, which centered on her love for school and demonstrated her dedication to perform well, I looked at other forms of resistance and noted the need for "more positive forms of Latino resistance" (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 320). I previously framed Rosa's re-reading "resistance as survival" which resulted in self-defeating conditions. For Alecia, I utilized the work of Tara Yosso to frame Alecia's resistance as a matter of "proving them wrong." Yosso's (2000) basis for a "prove them wrong" resistance includes students' attempts to confront the negative portrayals and ideas about Latinos/as, motivation by such negative ideas and images, and navigation through the educational system. With regard to understanding forms of resistance, Yosso (2000) explains that, "understanding 'prove them wrong' as resistance begins with recognizing the heavy burden many Chicanas/os carry, believing they are responsible for representing Latinas/os every time they succeed or fail" (p. 150).

Alecia expressed her motivation to perform well in school when she stated, "I have all A's at school and in all of my subjects," and "I want to be a straight A student this whole year," in her previous interpretive tale. Alecia exhibited her motivation as a form of resistance. Resistance as "prove them wrong" builds upon what Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) refer to as *transformational resistance* (Yosso, 2000). Transformational resistance refers to "student behavior that illustrates both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice" (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 319). Although Alecia did not consciously reveal transformation with social justice in mind, I believe she was responding to covert forms of marginalization within the educational system, and at some level she had an awareness of social change. Her awareness for social change was evident in the types of school clubs she participated in. As revealed in her earlier interpretive tale, she belonged to a community service group at school, which she described as, “makes a difference.”

When we talked about her goals in life or the purpose of school, she shared a unique response that demonstrated a desire to improve life for herself in the future so that her children would have a better life. She also recognized the language barrier that seemed to develop between her parents and younger sibling. She continued to identify with the Latino/a culture, speaking Spanish at home and watching Spanish television shows. Furthermore, Alecia had a keen awareness of the two worlds she juggled and the struggles of her cultural heritage. I viewed all of these factors as adding to the “prove them wrong” resistance displayed in Alecia’s experiences. I believed she was aware of certain inequalities and struggles that existed mostly for Latinos/as, so she strived to perform her best, resisting the negativity often associated with her ethnicity. Finally, I hope that Alecia’s “prove them wrong” resistance adds both to the “acknowledgement of how Latino/a students cope with or respond to these educational conditions” (Fernandez, 2002, p. 47) and to the more positive forms of Latino/a student resistance. The tenants of LatCrit theory include challenging the dominant ideology and making visible the Latino/a lived experience. Framing various forms of Latino/a educational resistance more positively not only highlights the daily lives of students but also aids in an understanding of resistance “as a site of possibility and human agency” (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 337).

Miguel: Performing Masculinity

Evident in Miguel’s previous interpretive tale, his ideas of masculinity permeated his school experiences. A “respectful,” “straight [good person],” and “strong” image was how Miguel preferred to be viewed by his peers, teachers, as well as by his family. “Show no fear” became Miguel’s personal mantra for any challenges he faced throughout daily life. In re-reading Miguel’s school-based experiences, I focused on his construction and option to perform his masculinity, while considering other factors that contributed to his ideas of masculinity. My hope was not to focus on machismo in order to avoid the "cultural essentializing of Latino cultures" (Mora, 2013, p. 340) but rather to consider institutional factors that shaped Miguel's experiences.

Many challenges exist for Latino males in schools; Latino boys are more likely to be labeled with a learning disability or with behavioral issues (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009) while "boys of color" are twice as likely to be held back a grade (Shaffer & Gordon, 2006). Therefore, the challenges faced by Latino boys along with other minority males conditions them to higher fail rates within the educational pipeline (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Kaufman et al. (2010) suggest that middle school provides a particular stage with increased behavior and disciplinary issues. Although Miguel was not necessarily labeled as learning disabled or as behaviorally problematic, I considered such institutional realities as factors that shaped his masculine performativity which became a way for him to resist such labels.

Peer influence also played a role in shaping Miguel's masculine performativity. In re-reading Miguel's story of gym class, where he acquired the name "Mini-man," he described a gendered expectation of physical strength. Miguel's height was considered "short" by his peers, so the day he successfully accomplished a particular physical act in gym class, he was celebrated and awarded much positive attention from his peers. Jon Swain's (2003) work on the construction of masculinities posits that masculinity is defined by peer groups and constructed collectively, while the work of Richard Mora (2013) adds that, "youth from varied racial and class backgrounds are called upon to prove their masculinities in different manners" (p. 342). Considering Mora's point, Miguel seemed to receive the most attention and encouragement for his physical strength and "show no fear" demeanor with his peers. This encouragement was apparent in the bullying stories Miguel told as well. The influence from his peers seemed to focus on physical matters rather than academic or intellectual matters, and therefore influenced the way in which Miguel opted to perform masculinity.

Although Miguel was a good student, academically speaking, and held positive relationships with his teachers, he did not emphasize academics or teachers in our discussions over the course of data collection. Considering the institutional practices of U.S. public schools and the gendered treatment of students, many scholars have documented the welcoming and supportive treatment of female students compared to male students (Lopez, 2003; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). Largely represented as more engaged, female students are often provided more support from their teachers (Lopez, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). During the brief time we were able to talk about schoolwork, Miguel spoke of his own actions, giving credit to himself rather than his teachers when he stated, “I feel like I pay attention in school and utilize my teachers for help.” On the surface, Miguel exhibited positive support from his teachers, but when he talked about such interactions, he framed them within the premise that it was his responsibility to develop and encourage mutual, respectful relationships between his teachers and him.

Miguel’s performance of masculinity was based on the institutional constraints through his daily encounters at school. Although gender norms of his culture (*machismo*) influenced his performativity to some degree, I chose to focus on the institutional factors in the U.S. that shaped his experiences in the critical re-telling of Miguel’s story. I referred to the literature on normative gender practices that included but was not limited to the underachievement and deficit views of Latino boys in school, social constructivist views of masculinity and peer influence, and differential treatment between girls and boys in school. As a result, my critical re-reading of Miguel’s experiences demonstrated how he opted to perform masculinity given the institutional constraints he was awarded. Miguel therefore experienced masculinity as a place of performativity in which he received positive attention and encouragement for his physical strength and courageous “show no fear” demeanor. Masculinity as a place of performativity became a mode of resistance for Miguel to counter the underachievement and deficit views of Latino boys, while also allowing him a way to fit in and be accepted by his peers.

In chapter four, I have introduced the context of my study, the demographics, and the population studied. By using a tale-telling approach (Woodbrooks, 1991) I presented the data as two separate readings, the first reading being interpretive while the second reading utilized a critical lens. The content of chapter four included the tales of my three participants, Rosa, Alecia, and Miguel. To recap, Rosa's interpretive tale revealed a need for effective and individualized academic support from her teachers, while her willingness to work hard and overcome obstacles revealed a valuable resource to her school experiences. Rosa's critical tale revealed a mode of resistance that was a response to cultural dominance.

Alecia's interpretive tale revealed a need for more informal interactions with her teachers in order to establish student-teacher relationships that were not based solely on Alecia's academic performance. She was also a highly driven and dedicated student, granting her a valuable resource for navigating her academics. Alecia's critical tale revealed a mode of resistance quite different from Rosa's. Whereas Rosa's resistance was sometimes self-defeating, Alecia's resistance was revealed in the form of high motivation to achieve her goals no matter her obstacles and the belief that she was capable of making a difference and to counteract stereotypes of Latino/a students.

Finally, Miguel's interpretive tale revealed a need for school to be a place where he could allow himself to be vulnerable and make mistakes through his academic learning. In other words, he needed school to be a place where he could let go of his personal mantra, "show no fear." He was also confident and navigated through school life easily, which was a resource for him in times of conflict with and between his peers. Miguel's critical tale revealed a performance of masculine identity as a way to resist common labeling issues faced by young Latinos and other minority males in schools. On the other hand, masculinity as a place of performativity allowed him a way to fit in with his peers.

CHAPTER V

ADOLESCENT MEANDERINGS II: THE INDIVIDUAL TALES

This chapter presents the individual tales of the remaining four participants in my study. I continued to utilize a tale-telling approach to present both the individual and critical tales of Denise, Claudia, Jasmyn, and Carlos. In the interpretive tales, I attempted to highlight both the learning needs and the resources unique to each participant. On the other hand, the critical tales sought embedded influences or inequities relevant specifically to Latino/a students' school experiences. This chapter concludes the individual tales.

The Interpretive Tales

Denise: Leader Forthcoming

Sporting her hair in a ponytail and chipped nail polish on her fingernails, Denise had a particular femininity about her. She often wore a zip up, long sleeve pullover displaying the word, L-O-V-E, in glittery pink writing down the left, front side and she always smelled of a fruity, floral aroma. My observations and first impressions of her as "girly" proved to be ironic when she told me one of her favorite things to do was play football with her older, male cousin. Also a bilingual Spanish-English sixth grader, Denise was twelve years old and language designated as FEP and in her second year of monitoring. She made good grades and had attended school in this district since the first grade. She enjoyed doodling her name in block or bubble letters, and planned multiple sleepovers with her friends. Although Denise did not necessarily view herself as a leader and she could be somewhat reserved at times, I often observed her displaying determination and focus in her school expectations and with her peers; a fruitful combination for a future leader.

"Eighty-five percent! Excellent job on the quiz so you don't need to retake it." Denise's teacher was telling her this as she conferenced with Denise about a recent quiz they took in class. I could barely hear Denise's quiet and unvaried response as she walked directly back to her desk. For the remainder of the class students spent time drawing and coloring maps onto large pieces of paper. Denise sat on the front row, directly in front of the white board. All of her colored pencils were perfectly lined up on her desk, competing for space with her paper, and at times a pencil would roll off her desk onto the floor. A female peer across the aisle from Denise leaned over to pick up one of the pencils and hand it to her. "Thank you" said Denise. A few seconds later Denise turned in her seat and visited quietly with another female peer. She often appeared as a quiet student but Denise actively participated in class and engaged with her teachers and peers.

Denise was born in Texas and shared that her family continues to visit friends and family there. She enjoyed attending the school district's high school football games, a popular event among the locals. In my impression, football was an important part of the culture of the suburban school district for which this study took place; however, I was surprised that out of all of the participants, Denise was the only one who mentioned it. A typical afterschool routine, involved Denise completing her homework first, then showering, enjoying free time, and eating dinner. She lived with both parents, two younger sisters, and one younger brother.

Through our conversations I also learned that Denise had an older sister who lived in Mexico. When I asked her about how she spends her summers, she immediately told me about the most recent one. Denise and her family spent the entire summer in Mexico with her older sister so that "they could all be together as a family." Both of her parents worked- her mother occasionally babysat for acquainted families, otherwise she stayed at home with her younger, four-year old brother and remained available to Denise and her other siblings. Her dad “does landscaping” but sometimes did other manual labor jobs for his boss. In describing her dad’s work, Denise said, “he can fix a lot of things… he can paint a house and do a lot of other things.” When I talked to Denise at length, it became evident that she enjoyed spending time with her dad. Recounting a work trip that her dad took the whole family on, she told me that she was the only one who joined her dad and his boss for a round of golf at some point during their trip.

Academically, Denise enjoyed most all of her classes with language arts being her least favorite. Not surprisingly, she did not recall ever getting in trouble at school. I considered Denise to be a rule follower; however, she never appeared to be uptight or anxious about her schoolwork or in her interactions with teachers and peers. I arranged for our second observation to take place during Denise’s elective, vocal class. I needed to follow her to her next class since I wasn’t familiar with the entire campus. Although she didn’t necessarily walk with me, she acknowledged my presence and continued to walk with her classmates down the stairwell and out the doors. We walked on the covered sidewalks that linked the buildings together.

It was a sunny day; the air was crisp and cool as expected for a perfect Fall morning in the Midwest. What seemed like hundreds of students appeared on the lawn and sidewalks as students and classes transitioned from one building to another. I was trying my best to keep up with Denise and not lose sight of her, feeling more and more anxious that I would get lost. Her pace quickened to a light jog as the distance between us grew. I refrained from chasing her so as to not make an awkward scene. When I finally caught up to Denise, she was standing in a line with other students outside of the music building. A female teacher held up her arm and made a small gesture with her hand. I jokingly asked Denise, “why were you running from me?” and without smiling she told me that they had to line up in order and be on time. Denise took school rules and teacher requirements seriously and did not stray from the expectations.

More Opportunities to Apply and Process Skills

Although I considered Denise to be a good student who always followed the rules, never got into trouble, and held good academic standing, she needed less academic pressure and a more relaxed environment. In a conversation about some of her classes Denise expressed that “it’s easier to learn when you feel relaxed.” She told me a story about a class she felt particular tension in stating, “if she [teacher] sees us not doing something, but we are actually thinking, she thinks we are distracting ourselves and she’s very strict.” Denise needed a relaxed environment to maximize her learning, and she needed her teachers to provide her the time to process her thoughts and “think” about what she had learned in order to better apply the skills at a later time. At times she felt frustrated at school and used an interesting analogy to express her frustration stating, “school is sometimes interesting but when you feel frustrated it’s like being in jail or something like that…” Listening to Denise describe her frustration revealed the pressure she sometimes experienced in her academic setting. When I asked Denise what she needed from school, she did not mention a particular area or subject; however, she hinted that she wanted to read more. I saw her desire to read more not as an area of academic struggle, but as an area where she could use more encouragement. Although Denise resisted identifying herself as a reader, she expressed her desire to read more stating, “I want to be more like my friends and read more, but I can barely read so I don’t really like it.” According to Guthrie and Wigfield’s (2000) reading engagement theory, “motivation is the foundational process for reading engagement” (p. 405). Furthermore, Unrau, Ragusa, and Bowers (2015) found that teachers felt relationship building with students was important and that teachers must build students self-esteem and trust in order to help students feel motivated to read. Denise seemed motivated to read, however she needed to be given more opportunities to read so that she could build her confidence in reading. Curious to further understand Denise, I asked her to describe an example of what a comfortable, relaxed learning environment looked like. She described how one of her teachers created a comfortable environment and allowed her to practice her skills “by walking around the room and telling us stories while we work on our math problems.”

Denise was unique compared to her peers in that she was extremely well rounded in her interests and abilities at school. She enjoyed expressing herself creatively by drawing in her free time, and she thrived when challenged with a new skill or ability. By now I had experienced Denise's somewhat stoic mannerisms, rarely displaying any particular facial expressions. I recall our conversation about her preference for drawing as one of the only times a smile adorned her face; however, it quickly faded when she told me she had to wait until next semester to take art class. I did not consider Denise unhappy, but she was rather serious. When she was at school, I sensed that she became more focused. Denise needed a balance of the core academic subjects and the arts in order to offset the demands she felt from academic studies. In an article titled, "No Child Left with Crayons: The Imperative of Arts-Based Education and Research with Language 'Minority' and Other Minoritized Communities," Chappell and Cahnmann (2013) assert that limited access to arts in schools tends to have the greatest impact on minoritized youth. They argue that youth will continue to utilize creative production to respond to the circumstances of their lives; therefore, the arts serves as a transformative, emancipatory, and aesthetic purpose that can build multiliteracy communities and negotiate cultural differences. Denise was motivated by a challenge and would benefit from a fusion of the demands of her core academic subjects and the creative outlet offered in arts education.

Supportive Network

Denise was remarkably mature for a twelve year old, sixth grade girl. She was content with who she was and identified herself as studious. She was confident in herself, with good reason, sharing "I study for a few minutes every day and again at night. Then the day before a test, I study all over again and into the night." Denise's academic efforts were above and beyond that of many of her peers. The fact that her family, particularly her father, encouraged college and discussed career options with Denise on a regular basis more than likely factored into her academic efforts. When I asked Denise what her plans were after high school she immediately said she wanted to go to college. During our conversation, I sensed her familiarity with the topic of college and followed up by asking her what her scholarly interests were for college. She said, "I really want to study to be a doctor but I would also like teaching." She was also one of the only participants who named the actual colleges she considered attending in the future and whose family offered an opinion on specific colleges. Denise's father was particularly supportive of her attending college in Texas but his second choice for Denise was Oklahoma State University. She laughed when she talked about her dad's preference for colleges and shook her head a little saying, "Texas and Oklahoma are pretty much the same thing, it doesn't matter." The support Denise received for her current and future academic efforts was evident in her stories, specifically including her father, revealing that her family knew the steps needed in order for Denise to progress through public school and into college.

Our conversation about her family continued and smoothly transitioned to extended family and close friends. Not only did Denise have a supportive family at home, she also had family and neighborhood friends who offered support and stability in the social and academic areas of her life. For example, she had an older, male cousin who was a popular football player at the school district's high school and who had been contacted by multiple colleges for recruitment purposes. Denise supported her cousin by attending his football games, but also relied on him for academic support and advice. She explained how she often relied on extended family:

> My mom sometimes can help me with my homework, or if she doesn't understand all of the English, I just go to my cousin's house and then he's the one who helps me.

She also recounted vacations she took with her close neighborhood friends and how their families often relied on each other for various reasons. When she described her life outside of school, she described a safe, supportive network of friends and family.

The support Denise described reminded me of the literature on social capital theory and how it relates to Latino/a academic success. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as the resources available to an individual based on group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support. Furthermore, research on academically successful Latino/a students concludes that the reason some Latino/a youth are able to achieve academic success while others do not, is due to social capital (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Ream, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Denise took school seriously and her parents and extended support system were committed to her success. The role of social capital in Denise's life seemed to support her academic success.

Denise was focused and often preoccupied with her immediate school tasks when she was at school. She took school seriously. The characteristics of being a focused and serious student allowed Denise to bring the kind of responsibility and studiousness any teacher would ask in a student. Another valuable resource for Denise was her family and her community. She had a strong support network, granting her the kind of social capital needed for academic success in the U.S. public school system. Three main needs were revealed in Denise's tale. First, she needed time to think and apply any newly learned skills taught in her classes, while preferring a relaxed environment free from pressure. She also needed her teachers to encourage her to read more in order to help build her confidence in the task. Finally, Denise needed a creative outlet, such as art, to offset the demands of her academics.

Claudia: The Soccer Panda

Soccer was the heartbeat of Claudia's family. In her deep, low-toned voice Claudia immediately talked about how her dad played soccer in Mexico and she gave him credit for teaching her, as well as her older sister the basic fundamentals of the game. During the time this study took place, her older sister played on the varsity soccer team at the high school and Claudia played on a competitive soccer team in which she travelled to neighboring states over most weekends. Her thick, long black hair was usually slicked back into a high ponytail with a brightly colored, sporty headband positioned around the top of her head. She had an all around athletic look about her. Another passion of Claudia's was animals. She shared with me how her dog died recently and how she was the most saddened in her family because she was its main caretaker. She giggled when she told me she loved pandas too and in typical, girlish eleven-year old fashion randomly told me her self invented nickname, the soccer panda. A confident, happy go lucky sixth grader, Claudia's favorite subject was math. She had been enrolled in the school district since kindergarten and was currently labeled FEP, and in her second year of monitoring status. She was fluent in Spanish and English but did not consider herself a good reader. She stated, "I'm not good at reading because of my reading level… because other people in my class have a reading level of nine or eight and mine is like a four…" Claudia's lack of confidence in reading was a result of comparing her own "reading level" to that of her peers, based on a computerized reading test that students take multiple times throughout the school year in order to monitor their progress. Although Claudia was born in the U.S. she considered herself Mexican.

Getting to know Claudia on a personal level was quite easy; however, getting Claudia to talk extensively about anything school related proved to be challenging. She offered short answers and often found a way to relate everything to soccer. I sensed her confidence and familiarity in school on numerous occasions and concluded that she simply preferred to talk about her personal interests rather than her academics. In class, Claudia was actively engaged and participated. I often observed her raising her hand to answer a question the teacher posed or singing along with a familiar song on a science video, for example. I observed her in core academic classes as well as in a vocal elective class and she always seemed to have the same focused engagement. In fact, she often sat near the front of the classroom, if not the front row. For the most part, Claudia was typically a laid back, energetic, and happy sixth grade girl.

When she talked about her family, I sensed the same laid back attitude, in that Claudia maintained a healthy balance of school and extracurricular activities without too much pressure or seriousness from her parents. She also got along well with her peers and most notably she seemed to be well respected by her closest male peers. Claudia's friends liked her because she was always in a good mood and she was easy to get along with. She enjoyed school and when I asked if she could change anything about school, what would it be, she replied with a big, somewhat mischievous grin, stating, "I think we shouldn't have to wake up so early to come to school." To date, the routine of schooling has been decided by adults' schedules; however, ongoing debates continue around school start times in which school administrators are being asked to "weigh the factual information about the biology of adolescents' sleep patterns against the competing demands of teachers' work preferences, athletic and afterschool activity schedules, and bus transportation schedules" (Wahlstrom, 2002, p. 3).

On a particularly wet, dreary day in October, students were kept indoors throughout their lunch break. When they were done eating, they went to the gymnasium rather than going outside like they normally would. The coaches had designated areas for specific physical activities for the students to choose from. I had arranged to do an interview with Claudia after lunch but had arrived early and decided I might try to find her during lunch to observe her in a different setting. Most of the students had finished eating, and I could hear the mass of adolescent yelling and laughter mixed with the pounding of balls against the floor and walls pouring out of the double metal gym doors that were propped open. I ventured toward the noise. As soon as I stepped across the metal threshold I smelled the stale, dry varnish that sealed the wooden planks that made up the gym floor. The further I stepped into the gym, the varnish smell was drowned out as the air began to feel thick and heavy from too many pre-pubescent, active bodies in one space. I glanced around and mingled through the congregation of small groups in the gym. One end was designated for basketball and it appeared that most students were located there. The other end of the gym, consisted of faculty facilitated tug-of-war competitions. The students waiting in line were seated along a painted line on the gym floor, (im)patiently waiting. The middle area of the gym, contained a designated area for two to three games of four square, where I observed several females lined up. If students did not want to engage in a particular game, they had the option to walk laps around the outer border of the gym. The periodic whistles that echoed a little too well in the gym reminded the students of the policy against running.

Surprisingly, I located Claudia in one of the four square groups, blending in with all of the other girls congregated there- long hair bound in a ponytail with a sport headband across her forehead, wearing athletic leggings and a t-shirt with tennis shoes. Claudia saw me and waved. I could tell she did not want to leave the fun until the break was officially over. I continued to observe and did not interrupt her fun. When it was time to conclude the break, the teachers blew their whistles, and students seemed to know what to do as they all found a proper place in rows, marked by a painted line on the gym floor. While Claudia was walking to her spot, a couple of peers called out her name and gestured her to come and sit by them. At one point Claudia settled into a seat, then a group of boys at the front of the same line said "ask Claudia" as they turned backwards to motion for her to come up to them. She got out of her seat and ran up to them to talk for just a minute, and then, she returned to where she was sitting. Claudia seemed popular. As I became more familiar with Claudia, she seemed to have a strong sense of loyalty to her peers and did not mind speaking up for them. For example, she described feeling bad for a younger boy on the bus who continued to endure bullying even though he had told the bus driver and his parents. She stated, "his parents don't care so I told him whenever he gets bullied to tell me!" She was also confidently vocal in our focus group discussion about bullying stating, "stand up for people! Tell them to leave them alone! Then if they are bullying you just say 'stop and leave me alone!'" In listening to Claudia's responses, I could see why she was popular and seemed to be respected by her peers.

Upon walking back to the other building, I learned that Claudia had one older sister and one younger sister who both attended school in the district. Her older sister played on the high school soccer team and was contacted by a couple of colleges with the possibility of playing soccer. I took the opportunity to ask Claudia about her thoughts on college. She wanted to attend college someday, but it was not something she and her parents talked about. She proceeded to talk more about her older sister, and I gathered that her sister's experience might have been the only familiarity with college Claudia had ever been exposed to. Claudia enjoyed telling me about the soccer games she travelled to and played over most weekends. Her face lit up when she announced that she "scored a goal" and immediately smiled waiting for my response. I succumbed to her desire to talk about soccer and learned that she also played indoor soccer during the winter off-season for outdoor soccer. Claudia obviously loved soccer. When I could get her to talk about other school related topics, I learned that she enjoyed reading "scary" or "sad" books. At the time, she told me she was reading the book, *Almost Home*, about a girl and her dog. Claudia admitted to thinking the story would be different than it was, but still enjoyed reading the book.

Social and Interactive Learning Environment

If ever there were a student who thrived in a social and resourceful learning environment, it was Claudia. Clearly, she was a student who enjoyed group work that allowed her to engage in conversation and move around the room. In my field notes, I had noted on more than one occasion, "prefers to stand" or "out of seat." Claudia did not have a short attention span. Her teachers never seemed to mind her or any other students moving around the room and engaging with one another, and Claudia remained efficient with her assignments. Her desire to engage in group work existed out of her need to vocalize learning with her peers. Considering that middle level classrooms can be complex and dynamic environments, the literature on classroom management during the middle years poses that students are more likely to experience declines in academic motivation and self-esteem (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999). I recall feeling pleased to see classrooms with students moving about and engaging with one another at their own will. The students appeared happy and content in these classrooms, and I rarely observed classroom management issues- only one teacher's subtle reminder to keep the noise level at a minimum.

When I asked Claudia what she needed from school, she talked about her liking for hands on projects and mentioned that she "hates memorizing things." She wanted a learning environment that was physically engaging and socially interactive. Paired with peer engagement, Claudia often utilized any available classroom resources. She referred to the learning posters and anchor charts hanging on classroom walls. She also approached her teachers, asking them to borrow various resources such as a dictionary or thesaurus. She confided in me that they did not have a lot of books or supplies at home, but she never expressed this to her teachers. At home, it was not uncommon for her to rely on her older sister for homework help. She elaborated stating, “my parents don’t know how to read in English that much. They can talk it but they can’t read and write it.” She needed any of the learning tools her classrooms had to offer, and she utilized them well.

Given Claudia’s social nature and love for interactive learning activities, I was disappointed for her when she first told me her parents were not going to allow her to attend the annual sixth grade overnight field trip. Students who attend the district before sixth grade are aware of the event and it is something most incoming sixth graders look forward to. When Claudia first informed me she said, “I started crying ‘cause I couldn’t go… like, my big sister didn’t get to go because my parents were too worried something would happen.” Although the sixth grade teachers and parent volunteers attend and supervise the overnight field trip, Claudia’s parents did not feel comfortable allowing her to attend. There was a lack of trust and a concern that their child would not be cared for and they were not willing to risk the potential for something to happen to Claudia.

I considered other factors that might hinder families from allowing their child to attend. Literature on Latino/a family involvement in school suggests that schools need to be mindful of Latino/a parents’ comfort level. For example, Latino/a parents often prefer more authentic and personal interaction with school staff and smaller scale parent meetings presented in their own language versus the use of translators (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999; Valdes, 1996). I discovered that the school held a mandatory yet informative meeting for the parents before the event where information was offered in both Spanish and English. I also learned that the school, whether through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or other funds, almost always covered the costs for students whose families could not afford to send them on the field trip or buy the supplies necessary for the field trip. The school did a good job preparing families and setting up for the field trip; however, a distrust remained with Claudia's parents that unfortunately could have kept her from participating in what could be considered the most important event of sixth grade. Not without resistance, Claudia's parents, "at the last minute," allowed her to attend. According to Claudia, "the only way they would let me go on the field trip was because my soccer teammate's mom was going, and my parents know her, so she was my assigned parent for the field trip."

Time Management and Organizational Skills

Clearly, Claudia efficiently and effectively utilized the learning resources that were available to her, a skill few students at her age have mastered. She was an asset to any class because of her ability to organize group projects and get along with her peers. Overall, I was impressed with Claudia's ability to manage both her competitive soccer schedule and her schoolwork. Competitive sports teams that travel on a regular basis often cause students to miss school and complete homework in the car; a juggle that would be demanding for any family to manage. I viewed Claudia's family as supportive with a dependable routine at home. She once told me that she goes to bed "around ten o'clock every night;" however, her parents did not pressure her about soccer or school too much. There seemed to be a healthy balance between her parents' expectations and the relaxed, nurturing home environment they provided for her. Her parents were involved in school by attending parent-teacher conferences and parent meetings, and by displaying obvious concern for the safety and well being of their child.

Claudia needed a learning environment where she could move around and interact with her peers. She became easily bored and lost focus in settings where she had to remain quiet in her seat. Furthermore, due to the limited resources available to her at home, Claudia needed access to the resources available to her at school. With Claudia's demanding schedule, she did a good job managing her time and remaining organized. She travelled on weekends and sometimes checked out of school to travel and play in out of town soccer games. All the while, Claudia managed to complete her assignments, turn assignments in when they were due, and made good grades. She clearly had good time management and organizational skills.

Jasmyn: Covert Daydreamer

For all her appearance of meek, invisible existence, Jasmyn was actually an imaginatively skilled character. She loved to read and write. Her bohemian mind allowed her to author well written stories that deserved more recognition. I initially expected eliciting interview responses from her to be difficult because of her quiet, soft-spoken nature; however, I was pleasantly surprised after each of our interview sessions. Her soft and pleasant voice paired with her musing mind ironically drowned out the monotony of the school day that transpired around us. Eleven years old, Jasmyn was in the sixth grade and considered herself Mexican-American. She moved from a neighboring school district to the current district in the fourth grade. Jasmyn is language designated as FEP and in the second year of monitoring status. She was a bilingual Spanish-English speaker. Admittedly, Jasmyn's impression has managed to linger with me. I suppose it is because of her obscure demeanor that was sometimes misinterpreted by her teachers.

On an afternoon I was conducting my first round of interviews, I went to an area in the hallway to wait for Jasmyn, whom I was to interview next. It was right after the sixth grade lunch period so the hallways were temporarily chaotic with the chattering of students and the banging of locker doors as students scrambled to get to their immediate classroom locations. A teacher stepped out into the hallway to monitor such activities when she noticed I was standing nearby. She asked me whom I was waiting for. As the teacher proceeded to retrieve Jasmyn from her classroom she said, "good luck, she's a hot mess" as she turned her back to me and walked away. As much as I tried to disregard the teacher's comment, I couldn't help but imagine Jasmyn to be a possible behavior problem and somewhat difficult to work with. On another, separate occasion, when I was retrieving Jasmyn for our second interview, I was walking outside in between buildings as many of the sixth grade classes were transitioning from their electives back to the main building. A few teachers were monitoring the sidewalks to ensure students transitioned in a timely and smoothly manner. One of those teachers happened to be the same one that approached me about Jasmyn before our first interview. She smiled and said, “hi, are you here to see Jasmyn again? She should be coming along shortly. You know, I’m worried about her. She doesn’t interact very much with other students. I think she’s lonely.” At first I thought she had mistaken me for a councilor or possibly a social worker; however, that wasn’t the case. This time, her comments bothered me more, for I had already spent time with Jasmyn during one interview and had had the chance to observe her in a classroom. This was not at all the impression I had of Jasmyn.

As my time spent on data collection progressed, I became accustomed to easily locating Jasmyn at the school. If I planned to observe her in a classroom, I knew to look towards the back of the room. If I needed to locate her during a time when classes were transitioning, I knew to look for her stillness amongst the chaos. Basically, I could locate her standing quietly in front of her locker, standing calmly against a hallway wall, or waiting patiently outside of a classroom doorway. As much as she expressed her dislike for attention, her demeanor ironically caused her to stand out. Jasmyn enjoyed reading and indulged in reading popular new releases just as much as her peers did. In one of our interviews, she told me she liked to listen to “pop music” but was unable to name a specific band or musician. Jasmyn viewed herself as having “lots of friends” but also described a fondness for spending time by herself during recess, for example. She enjoyed “playing” and she “doesn’t like to talk a lot” according to what she told me during our conversation about peers and various parts of the school day.

I viewed Jasmyn as well supported by her family. Both of her parents lived in the home, along with her sixteen year old brother and her ten-year-old brother. Jasmyn was the middle child and “wished she had a sister.” I asked her what a typical afternoon was like and she described many leisurely activities of no set order or routine. She played in her backyard or at a neighborhood volleyball court. She sometimes cooked with her mom, and she completed any homework. She completed these activities in whatever order she felt at the time, without her parents dictating these tasks. Similar to Alecia, Jasmyn's parents limited her social activities outside of school, and she was not a part of any extracurricular activities. Jasmyn discussed the purpose of school within the context of preparation for later in life stating,

> Well school can kind of be boring but it's good for you because you can learn these things for later in life, like to get a job or something…later in life you are going to need to do these things, like when you get older and you get a job.

Jasmyn was able to expand on her definition, being the only participant who gave a more detailed example of how what they are doing in school now prepares students for later in life. In her soft voice, she continued, "so like, if you want to construct things you know math, you see how long things are supposed to be and like if you are doing blue prints then you learn how to measure things." Admittedly, I was surprised that she used a mathematics example since she seemed to favor reading and writing.

Student-Centered Approach to Learning

Clearly, Jasmyn's mind preferred spending time in a world of its own. Although Jasmyn was a good student and well behaved, daily reality was not creatively engaging enough to keep her in the present. On multiple occasions Jasmyn referred to herself as becoming bored at school. Her gypsy spirit needed the freedom to wander and often struggled to keep up with the structured monotony of a typical school day. Countless observation notes mentioned Jasmyn as needing a different pace, both physically and academically. On one occasion, I had written "Montessori" in my field notes, referring to Jasmyn's need for a more student driven interest or exploration of learning, rather than the more formal teaching methods common in public school today. When I asked her where she felt most comfortable at school, unlike any of the other participants, sadly she said, "not really anywhere because most of the time I want to draw." Jasmyn needed an environment that allowed her to tune in and out as her mind needed to, but she did not feel like any of her classes, teachers, or other parts of the day allowed her that freedom. Whereas most participants mentioned at least one classroom, one part of the day, or one teacher that made them feel like themselves, I found myself feeling slightly concerned, if not saddened for Jasmyn. Rarely, if ever, did she refer to a teacher or any other staff member who made her feel comfortable at school. Jasmyn talked about a situation where she sometimes felt uncomfortable at school stating, “I’m quiet ‘cause I’m kind of shy, like sometimes I don’t really want to raise my hand ‘cause everybody will look at me and I have to like, say it so loud so everybody can hear it.” I experienced Jasmyn as desperately needing the school community to understand her need for her casual learning style.

In recounting her favorite experiences at school, Jasmyn preferred special events. She felt most engaged during events such as an author’s visit to the school. Jasmyn was an aspiring writer herself and felt inspired by author guests. Our conversations often led to the topic of writing where Jasmyn expressed her love for writing but felt she never had time to write about her own ideas. In my second interview with Jasmyn she briefly told me about one of her writing assignments:

> My teacher, Mr. Jones, he’s really nice but I was really nervous… we were doing this narrative, I forgot what the project was but when I turned it in, I turned it in late but he still gave me credit for it and he said it was really good and that he’s never seen anything like it.

She would benefit from the opportunity to apply the writing skills she learned in school and on her school writing assignments to her own interests in writing. Jasmyn needed time to practice the language arts skills she was being taught in school more freely and needed the support and encouragement from her teachers so that she could flourish in her literary abilities. Another experience Jasmyn shared was about science. She said that she liked science but “sometimes it’s hard.” When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant she stated, “sometimes I don’t know the words that other people do so I think it’s too hard for me.” I sensed that Jasmyn was intrigued and curious to learn more about the topics presented in science class; however, from our interview, Jasmyn expressed feeling intimidated by the academic content language involved in the subject.

Research consistently shows that the cognitive academic language of the classroom and textbooks takes five to seven years to develop for second language learners (Cummins, 1981, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Furthermore, my experiences working with second language students as a teacher specialized in ESL instruction, I concur with the research surrounding academic language acquisition.

Self-Regulated Student

Although Jasmyn's mind often wandered during class, she also had a keen ability to ignore the chaos and rambunctiousness of her classroom peers. At times I found myself admiring Jasmyn's contentedness with not participating in class discussions or raising her hand when a teacher posed a question to the class. What some individuals could view as concerning, I viewed as Jasmyn possessing a positive authority over her own time and pace in life. Similarly, Jasmyn possessed what some scholars might refer to as self-regulated learning, which is "the degree that they are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process" (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). When she needed to or when she felt ready, Jasmyn would approach her teachers and ask them questions. On a few occasions, I observed her visiting quietly with a peer sitting next to her. Jasmyn was also aware of her wandering mind stating that, "it's kind of my fault," referring to her own thoughts' ability to distract her in class. She never blamed her teachers or peers for becoming distracted, and she was never a bother for anyone. Overall, Jasmyn had a refined awareness and control over her learning style. She brought a calming and consistent balance to many of her classrooms that her teachers often relied on.

Jasmyn's mother was particularly supportive of her creativity. She purchased a notebook for Jasmyn to write or draw in at home. The support she received from her mother helped her endure the lack of creativity in a regular school day. Without the support of her mother and a home that allowed her to roam freely, Jasmyn would not likely find contentment in the public school environment. Her parents regularly attended parent-teacher conferences throughout the school year and consistently expressed an interest in Jasmyn's school work.

In short, Jasmyn needed a learning environment that embraced a student-centered approach to learning due to her creative, often wandering mind. She also needed more support and encouragement in her creativeness, especially with her writing. Finally, Jasmyn's lack of academic content language hindered her from exploring other academic subject interests. Although she was labeled as a fluent English language learner, she still needed support in acquiring the content language of certain subjects, such as Science.

On the other hand, Jasmyn's creativity was well supported by her mother. Because of her mother's support, Jasmyn was content with herself and how her mind functioned. She was aware of and took ownership over her learning style which allowed her to be a successful student.

Carlos: A Genuine Soul

A genuine soul, Carlos's heart of gold was highly regarded among his peers and his teachers. Caring, easy to get along with, happy, and nurturing, I could applaud Carlos's character indefinitely. His long and lanky limbs were out of proportion with his adult sized feet that made him appear uncoordinated in an innocently goofy sort of way. On the brink of puberty, the juxtaposition of his squeaky changing voice and developing mustache, paired with his impressively articulate responses through a mouth full of braces, was admittedly sometimes distracting. Calm and collected during our interviews, he spoke slowly and seemed to always put thought into his responses to my questions, which in turn made him sound quite distinguished. Carlos was the type of kid you meet and hoped he never loses the genuine goodness that seemed to emanate willingly from him. As I previously mentioned, Carlos and Miguel considered themselves best friends. As Carlos described their friendship, "he [Miguel] will always be there for me." Carlos had been in the district since kindergarten and was labeled as FEP, in his second year of monitoring. He had an eight-year old brother who was considered special needs. Carlos did not talk much about his brother, and did not mind sharing about him, but his peers seemed to have high respects for the unique situation with Carlos' family. As Miguel put it, "I got to meet his brother that can't walk and he can't talk, but he is really nice. Carlos is amazing with him." I got the impression that Carlos didn't think twice of his family's situation, but others, including his teachers, absolutely admired Carlos for the care and nurturing he showed his younger brother. Therefore, other than the adult like responsibility and care he showed with his family, Carlos enjoyed being a typical twelve-year old who enjoyed reading the entire *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* collection and had no idea what he wanted to be when he grew up. As Carlos stated, "I have plenty of time to think about it and I just want to enjoy being a kid."

Simple and happy are the two words I had written in the margins of my interview notes after my final interview with Carlos. Carlos was an individual who was easily satisfied and laughed a lot. Although he told me Mystery and Fantasy book genres were his favorite, he talked more about the humorous books he read throughout the semester. Carlos was not immature by any means but comfortable "just being a kid." This quality stood out because he was not in any hurry to grow up like many students his age. In all of my conversations with Carlos, I did not approach the topic of college or the future. He preferred to talk about life in the present, so I did not want to over direct our conversations. Carlos could often be found helping others in need, sometimes by his own offerings and other times his teachers chose him. I recall one day in particular, unexpectedly meeting Carlos and another male student in the hallway. I had just rounded the corner to face a main artery of the school building- a wide, empty hallway. About ten feet in front of me and in a nonlinear manner, Carlos and his male counterpart, who happened to be in a wheelchair, were coasting all too quickly towards me down the hallway. Laughing and suddenly noticing my presence, Carlos hopped off the back of the wheelchair and planted his feet on the floor while holding the wheelchair handles to slow it down. Their smiles quickly faded as Carlos pushed the wheelchair past me. With my back facing them as I continued to walk down the hallway, I heard them giggle as soon as they passed me. Admittedly, I chuckled myself as I wouldn't have expected anything less from two adolescent boys in an all-too-tempting, large, secluded hallway. I viewed it as innocent frolicking, and they knew when to correct their behavior. In short, Carlos harbored a unique balance of responsibility and playfulness that made him stand out.

Out of all the participants, Carlos talked the least about his family. He lived with both parents and one younger brother who had special needs. Though Carlos often received empathy and received praise from others for his caring demeanor towards his brother, I sensed a resistance in Carlos. He did not want the condition of his brother nor the sacrifices he and his parents made for his brother to define who he was. I experienced Carlos as being delighted that someone showed interest in him as an individual, and that talked and listened to the things that he felt were relevant in his life. Assuming that his brother's needs were quite demanding on Carlos and the family, their after school routine was monotonous. When I asked him what his afternoons were like, he said, "I go home, I eat, I do homework, and then I get my stuff ready for the next day. Then I go outside for a little while, I take a shower, and then off to sleep." Carlos viewed himself as having several friends but named two in particular, one of which was Miguel. He did not seem to mind the fact that he was not involved in extracurricular activities; however, he talked about attending his friend's soccer games on the weekends. Carlos felt involved by simply attending events rather than participating in them.

Reciprocal Student-Teacher Relationship

Easy to talk to, open and honest, Carlos was always eager to tell me about the fun, hands on activities he experienced at school. He admitted to learning better through interactive activities and recounted how he struggled in a class the year before because they "just took notes all of the time." Carlos recognized that he was easily distracted at school and that he "played around" a lot. I never sensed that he was a behavior problem but most of my classroom observations of him consisted of notes that he seemed distracted. For example, I observed him in a Science class, and during a video the class watched, I had noted that Carlos tied his shoes, fiddled with school supplies, and put on his hoodie sweatshirt. In another classroom observation, I noted Carlos yawning and looking at the clock multiple times. Carlos needed an engaging learning environment filled with interaction and plenty of activity. If his learning environment was too monotonous or lacking in interaction, Carlos lost interest and became distracted. When I asked Carlos what he needed from school, he mentioned a desire to mingle more with his peers, and he longed for humorous teachers. Clearly, humor was somewhat of an outlet for Carlos, possibly because of the harsh reality of living with and caring for a special needs family member.

A topic that came up often in my conversations with Carlos was student-teacher engagement. Considering students' weak power position relative to teachers and other school personnel (Noddings, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999) is critical in understanding the needs of students academic success within classrooms and with schoolwork. Carlos, leaning back in his chair while clicking the pen in his hand, talked extensively about the need for teachers to approach students and initiate help. In a matter of fact tone he stated, "I like it when teachers approach each students and ask them for help" and continued:

> Sometimes a teacher will ask the entire class what they need help on and then it would be one of those awkward moments where like, the whole class is quiet. Now I have a teacher who just comes to our seats and we just tell her what we need help on, without like having the whole class hear like what problem, or thing I need help with.

Carlos continued:

> …it would be better if teachers could ask them [individual students] if they need help with something because, like during Math class, our teacher tells us to raise our hand for help but like, people could see, and like some people are extra shy to ask.

Carlos' preference for individualized attention and support from teachers somewhat echoed the preference of my first participant, Rosa. Whereas Rosa did not hesitate to approach teachers for individualized help, Carlos preferred his teachers to approach him.

In a later interview, Carlos and I revisited the topic of student-teacher relationships and helpful engagement. He reflected on his experience of teachers initiating help but also of the need for teachers to reassure students that seeking help is often crucial. First, he recounted a time when the book he was using to complete an assignment was not appropriate for the task stating,

> In language arts I didn't feel quite sure if I wanted to ask for help. Then I asked my teacher for help and then she noticed the book that I was reading was different and had more dialogue than what we were looking for, and then she just helped me and we found a page that actually had a complex sentence. She told me, "thank you for asking me for your help because that's what I'm here for."

Carlos began to consider such experiences and appeared to realize the advantages of a reciprocal student-teacher relationship:

> Don't be a shy person and ask for help, I've been in that problem where I wish I would have. This year one of my teachers tells us "don't be shy and ask me for help because that's what I'm here for, to help you with what you need help on." So now every once in awhile when I get stuck on something, I ask my teacher.

He continued stating, "…because now, my teacher knows when I'm stuck on something so she comes to me every once in awhile and asks, 'are you stuck on something, can I help you?'" Carlos' stories affirm the importance for scholars and educators alike to keep in mind the difference in the way students and teachers perceive school-based relationships and the impact of such relationships on student achievement (Valenzuela, 1999). Carlos needed his teachers to initiate helpful engagement with him because he often felt unsure about asking for the help he needed.

Responsible and Playful

Carlos came from a loving home. Although he endured family demands few others his age could relate to, Carlos did not take life too seriously. He enjoyed school as a place to play, learn, and socialize. Carlos frequently reminisced about elementary school in such a way that confirmed my sense of his desire to dwell in the playfulness of childhood. He took comfort in the times his current teachers allowed the class to "play around" during any available free time.

During this type of free time, Carlos usually played with the white boards or played a board game with other classmates. He desired to get along with everybody and actively tried to avoid conflict with peers. He was not argumentative, and he often let others speak their minds even if their perspective was incorrect. While other students seemed to get caught up in arguing about who was right and who was wrong, Carlos did not care to prove a point to anybody. He had the ability to sense what the "right" thing to do was in times of conflict with or between his peers. He also had a strong sense of empathy towards other people. Carlos recounted an incident during recess one afternoon at school when he was in the fifth grade:

> Last year there was this kid who had some mental problems but he was really nice. At recess we would let him take the ball from us, just to be nice to him, but these other girls who are really competitive just like, literally, took the ball away from him! He wasn't even half way to the field when they would take the ball, so like, that wasn't really nice. Anyway, me and Miguel stood up for him…

I politely interrupted Carlos at this point and asked him to explain how they stood up for the boy. Alert, with eyebrows raised, he continued:

> We told them [the girls] to just give him [the boy] a chance and they said no and that everybody has to be treated equally, but at the same time I thought it was quite a fair reason. He [the boy] gets a little sad when he doesn't have the ball so like we wanted him to at least get to experience that moment at least once every recess. So, I think we just stood up for him and he was talking to our teacher about how he felt like he belonged here, in this grade, which I felt quite good knowing that. Our teacher, she came up to us and she was like telling us good job.

He simply desired to get along with people and have a good time.

Carlos almost always completed his schoolwork which surprised me somewhat, since he tended to become distracted. He returned to school everyday with his homework completed. He shared that his mom usually helped him with homework when he needed it. Carlos was open about his grades and desired to do better in school even though he was a “B” student. Motivated and eager to learn, he set a goal for himself to make straight A’s for the current school year. Although Carlos’ parents relied on him to help with his brother, he was emotionally and personally well supported by them at home and school. I was thoroughly amazed at how much his parents relied on Carlos’s help with his brother. For example, Carlos referred to himself as “the translator for the family” as he shared about how his parents depended on him for help communicating with medical specialists for his special needs brother. He explained:

> For almost every appointment they [parents] like try getting the appointment times when I’m on breaks from school so I can go with them and help them translate. Sometimes they have to take me out of school. It’s actually quite fun.

I was impressed by Carlos’s ability to remain positive while continuing to set high achievement goals for himself at school. I was also impressed that his parents utilized Carlos’s bilingual abilities while trying not to infringe too much on his schooling. Furthermore, Carlos was the only participant that referred to his bilingual language use in real life situations. His story coincides with the depth of literature on the topic of language brokering. Lucy Tse (1995) described language brokering as “interpreting and translating performed by bilinguals in daily situations without any special training” (p. 181). Although some scholars (Morales, Yakushko, & Castro, 2012; Weisskirch, 2007) reported various findings of perceptions and feelings of brokering tasks, Corona et al. (2012) found that adolescents tend to perceive language brokering as an activity enabling them to help their family. Carlos seemed to associate positively with his brokering experiences. Finally, they attended parent-teacher conferences regularly and did what they could for Carlos to attend activities outside of school.

Carlos was a pleasure to be around, and from what I gathered through various comments as well as my own impressions, others seemed to agree. What Carlos needed most in his academic setting was for his teachers to remain mindful of student-teacher engagement. He needed his teachers to approach him for academic support, rather than waiting until he sought out help. He also needed positive encouragement from his teachers to seek academic support in times of need. Although Carlos seemed pleasantly childlike most of the time, he was extremely responsible. He set academic goals for himself and managed his personal responsibility to his family with his academic responsibilities successfully. All of which were valuable resources for his success.

Denise, Claudia, Jasmyn, and Carlos were the four participants presented in this chapter. My first layer of analysis followed the same hermeneutical approach that I utilized in chapter four. To briefly recap, Denise demonstrated leadership skills and had a strong, supportive family network to help her with homework and who directed her towards a path to college. At school, she needed more time and space to be with her thoughts and "think" about what she had learned that day. Claudia balanced a demanding schedule playing competitive soccer and keeping up with her academics. Her organization and time management skills served her well in school. She was social and flourished in a learning environment that was both physically engaging and socially interactive. Jasmyn was a daydreamer. She needed her school environment to be more student-centered, allowing her inquiries and curiosities to drive her learning. She also would benefit from a school environment that embraced her creative imagination. On the other hand, where the school environment somewhat lacked in supporting Jasmyn's creativity, her mother made up for. I believe the support she received from her mother allowed Jasmyn to remain confident and content with who she was, even though she sometimes didn't always "fit in" at school. Finally, Carlos was simply an innocent, well-behaved kid. His responsible side allowed positive attention from his teachers and peers, while his playful side served to balance out the rigors of the school day without drawing negative attention. He sometimes needed encouragement from his teachers to ask for the academic help he needed. He also needed a learning environment where his teachers would approach him and offer unconditional support. Next, I present the critical tales of all four participants which conclude this chapter.

The Critical Tales

Denise: Leader Forthcoming as Invisible Historical Being

Denise's participation in school culture exceeded that of other participants. She seemed fully ingrained in the cultural norms of what could be considered a typical White suburban community. Denise was studious and well behaved; she regularly attended the high school football games with her peers, and she discussed these experiences. She appeared to fit in quite well with the dominant culture of her school; however, Denise's leadership skills went unrecognized, becoming a site of contest upon my critical re-reading of her school-based experiences. Imagining herself as a leader was not attainable to her, and thus internalized within the context of school. Her responses to my inquiries about her leadership skills were especially revealing:

> Researcher: "…I enjoyed observing your group's skit in vocal class the other day. It looked like you were the one in charge of your group…"
>
> Denise: "Uh… kind of… I was the narrator so I had to tell everyone what to do."
>
> Researcher: "Oh, so did your teacher say that the narrator of each group would be in charge and kind of facilitate the group?"
>
> Denise: "Well no… my other friend and me kind of had to be in charge but she only had a little bit of parts so I became more of the one who told everybody what to do."
>
> Researcher: "Well you seemed very natural at leading your group. Do you ever think of yourself as a leader or having leadership skills?"
>
> Denise: "Um… no, not really."
>
> Researcher: "Take a minute to try to think of other times that you may be in a leader role…"
>
> Denise: "Well… I guess when I get home. Like at home my mom is cooking dinner and we're doing our homework at the table so then when I'm done with my homework I help

> my sisters. Then, when we are all done eating dinner, I tell my sisters what to clean up and we clean the whole table."

The scenarios in vocal class and at home were not that different from one another in that Denise acted as a facilitator to keep others on task. I prompted Denise to talk about the differences in the two situations as follows:

> Researcher: "So, how come at school you don't think of yourself as a leader?"
>
> Denise: "Uh, 'cause it's like different…"
>
> Researcher: "How? Are you more shy at school, or..?"
>
> Denise: "No, I don't really see myself as a leader, but… I only see myself as a leader at home. I don't know why (*whimsical laugh*)."

Despite my encouragement and compliments regarding her promising leadership skills, Denise clearly could not imagine herself as a leader in the context of school. In addition, she never recounted any story about receiving special recognition in any of the interviews. I became more perplexed by her inability to identify herself as a leader at school, so I considered the contextual forces that were inhibiting her from such imaginations. The work of Ruth E. Zambrana (2011) originally led me to explore matters associated with inferior curriculum. Her work focuses on how Latinos/as have been studied and shifts the focus from cultural explanations of unequal outcomes in education, to structural explanations such as inadequate school settings, inferior curriculum, and low-quality schools. An inferior curriculum refers to certain groups, such as Latinos/as, being represented less frequently or as positively than other groups. The over-representation of certain groups in the curriculum results in a superior/inferior binary. In Denise's case, I coupled the absence of Latino/a contributions to U.S. society in the curriculum and the classroom context in general with Denise's inability to identify herself as a leader within the context of school.

Antonia Darder posits that, "Latino children cannot undergo a process of genuine empowerment without the opportunity to come to know who they are as historical beings…" (In

Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 323). Zambrana (2011) asserts that, "Latinos as a national, heterogeneous demographic, and predominantly citizen group are not a visible part of the American public imagination" (p. 78). Within the context of school, Denise and the fabric of her culture were rarely represented as part of leadership in U.S. society, thus rendering it impossible for her to visualize herself as a leader in her school community. This was evident in the fact that she felt like a leader at home with other family members but not at school with her peers. In Valenzuela's (1999) study on subtractive schooling, student participants struggled to "feel proud" of both their Texas heritage and their Mexican heritage after visiting a battle memorial that portrayed "white men killing Mexicans in every single picture" (p. 212). Similar to the participants in Valenzuela's study, Denise had strong ties to both U.S. and Mexican cultures, often spending her Summers crossing the border between Texas and Mexico where many close friends and family members remained. Examples such as these in which Latino/a students are faced with insufficient historical accounts, "challenge these students' efforts to validate the Mexican experience" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 211). Denise's effort to validate her experiences at school was challenged when faced with an "insufficiently sympathetic curriculum" and school environment (Valenzuela, 1999).

In my critical re-reading of Denise's school-based experiences, I focused on her hesitancy to identify as a leader at school, and through my own observations, I concluded that she received neither the encouragement nor recognition as such. I referred to literature on matters of inferior curriculum and school environment to consider Denise's struggle in validating herself. As Darder states, "such an educational reality subjects and conditions Latino students to a realm of historical amnesia… growing up without a firm grasp of our collective historical identity" (In Sleeter & McLaren, 1995, p. 322).

Claudia: A Matter of Parental Distrust

Historically speaking, deep-rooted struggles relating to conflicting interests and assumptions exist between the public educational system and bicultural families. The reasons for the distrust of public education among Latino/a parents have been thoroughly documented (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Giroux, 2001; Ochoa, 1997; Olivos, 2004; Valdes, 1996), including issues of cultural bias, institutional racism, and economic exploitation, to name a few. In Ereka R. Williams and Ceola R. Baber's (2007) case study on African-American parents' perspectives on home-school collaborations, a theme of distrust permeated all data sources in which participants "did not appear to see historical realities as disconnected from current ones" (p. 8). Meaning that, the historical experiences of desegregation and resegregation prevented them from completely trusting the school with their child's best educational interest. In my re-examination of Claudia's case, I focused on the story of her parents' reservations in allowing Claudia to participate in a sixth grade field trip. I concluded that a parental distrust existed because of both the historical, deep-rooted struggles and a distrust in the school. I read her story as parental distrust and further questioned the degree in which Claudia's parents held this feeling. Although I did not hear from Claudia's parents directly, I drew on Claudia's own comments and personal desire to attend the field trip.

This particular field trip had a popular reputation, and most students anxiously anticipated attending. The trip required overnight stay for teachers, chaperones, and students, and its educational premise was to build teamwork and community. For this reason, the trip was scheduled shortly after the beginning of the school year. Flyers and phone announcements were sent during the time leading up to the field trip, and a parent meeting was held prior to the field trip. Many sixth graders contend that, "it is the thing we most look forward to sixth grade year."

Building on the view that Claudia's parents held a level of distrust towards the school, I took the approach of understanding Latino families. Concha Delgado-Gaitan's (2004) book focuses on involving Latino/a families in schools. Her discussion of Latino/a family life offers insight for understanding the decision making processes of Latino/a parents, especially when it come to school. For example, she considers the fact that "extended family plays a very strong role" (p. 3), meaning that the Latino/a family often acts as the main social unit that drives the particular activities for which Latino/a youth participate in. Building on this view, it seemed that Claudia's parents hesitated to allow her participation because the community responsible for her would not be that which they were accustomed to (the family social unit), let alone the rarity that the field trip required an overnight stay. Claudia described her parents' dilemma:

> At first I started crying. Like, my big sister didn't get to go because my parents didn't let her go either. Well, they decided at the last minute because a mom on my soccer team was going and my parents know her, so that's the only way they would let me go. So since she was my assigned parent, I got to go.

Knowing the dilemma that took place between Claudia and her parents, I shifted my focus to consider her parents' hesitancy and the option to chaperone the field trip themselves, yet they allowed Claudia to attend with a trusted parent from their soccer community.

To recap, Claudia played on a competitive soccer team that frequently traveled for games. I reasoned that Claudia's soccer community was similar to her family social unit in that much time is spent together, and there is a shared sense of responsibility. I considered this a factor that played into Claudia's parents' final decision to let her attend the field trip; however, other reasons have been noted as to why parents choose not to participate in school events themselves. Although Claudia's parents were supportive and involved, and they attended some school events, such events usually related to information on academic performance such as parent-teacher conferences. The discrepancy between what Latino/a parents may view as important and valid and what the school views as important and valid yields another point to consider. Edward M. Olivos (2004) contends that, "conflicts between Latino parents and the public schools often lay in their differing views and values about education" (p. 31). Delgado-Gaitan (2004) suggests that some Latino/a parents simply "do not have experience in the school system" (p. 5) thus rendering it unfamiliar.

Cultural differences in parental involvement and understanding how Latino/a parents might perceive interactions with schools were important factors in my re-examination of

Claudia's school field trip experience. Delgadon-Gaitan (2004) adds that, "achieving parent involvement is an ongoing process with the goal of including parents in the discussion making about their child's education" (p. 21). I argue that authentic relationships between Latino/a parents and schools will develop only by involving parents in the collaboration of academic plans for their Latino/a children. Latino/a parent involvement often consists of busy work rather than work which develops a meaningful partnership based on respect and mutual responsibility (Olivos and Ochoa, 2006). Based on his own personal experiences in the field, Olivos (2004) found that, "Latino parents simply refuse to attend or participate in school related activities which they believe are useless, particularly in light of other obligations they may have in regard to home or work" (p. 31).

I focused on the field trip in my re-reading of Claudia's experiences because she referred to the event as being "her favorite thing about sixth grade so far." Several other participants expressed similar attitudes, but Claudia was the only one whose family truly struggled in their decision making, and it seemed to be a big deal that Claudia was granted permission. Although I never talked to Claudia's parents directly, my critical standpoint led me to consider the overall restrained participation of her parents at school. Latino family life and cultural differences in parental involvement contributed to my understanding of the decision making process of Claudia's family, while the historical realities of Latino families and the public educational system contributed to my understanding of the distrust harbored by Claudia's parents.

Jasmyn: "Pushed to the Margins"

At first glance it seemed that Jasmyn did not want to be noticed, but as I re-read Jasmyn's experiences it became clear that she had internalized cultural and institutional factors, which in turn shaped her behavior at school. I framed Jasmyn's critical tale as "pushed to the margins" (hooks, 1984) because I came to understand her experience in a space where she encountered a form of silencing at the intersection between gender and race (*Latina*). Critical to my understanding and reading of Jasmyn's experiences as a *Latina*, Myriam N. Torres' (2004) critical personal narrative of being a *Latina* in "America" posits, "myths have been carefully crafted to shadow this type of gender-ethnic group inequity" (p. 124). Building on this view, I referred to the works of Pierre Bourdieu and bell hooks. In general terms, Bourdieu's cultural theory serves to, "identify and interrogate the processes by which the making of cultural distinctions secures and legitimates forms of power and control rooted in economic equalities" (In Storey, 2009, p. 202) while hooks (1984) argues that multiple oppressions in the form of gender, ethnicity, race, and class, to name a few, confine people to the margins. hooks' reference to "the margins" can be understood as a form of unequal positioning.

Torres (2004) addresses her experiences with sexism, ethnic profiling, social class, and racism as a Latina. Similarly, I re-read Jasmyn's experiences as relating to Torres'. In talking about her home life, Jasmyn often referred to her mother as opposed to her father. She seemed to identify with her mother, even expressing a desire to "have sisters" in addition to having brothers. She stated, "sometimes I play with my brothers but, it's kind of complicated because I'm a girl and they're boys." Jasmyn was describing a gendered notion of interaction between herself and her male siblings. Her choice of words, "it's complicated," revealed that the male and female genders do not always interact on equal terms. Another reference to her mother and females in general existed in her description of her parents' line of work. She explained that her dad was a mechanic, but she did not state exactly what her mom did; however, she added:

> I help her at home 'cause like she has to come home when she's done working and clean the whole house. Like, I help her and she says she doesn't know what she would do without me 'cause my brothers, like, don't help her. They just… they're lazy playing video games and stuff.

Common within the Latino/a culture, Torres (2004) discussed her experiences with what she calls the "*Latino machismo* of privilege and dominance" in which she states that, "at home boys would not do chores" (p. 131). Characterizing her experience in growing up *Latina* and the Latino culture in general, she states that, "it was implicit that household chores were mostly the woman's responsibility" (Torres, 2004, p. 132). Torres' work helped relate similarities between the culture of Jasmyn's Latino family and such internalized gender messages, likely transferring to the context of school. For example, in Jasmyn's first interpretive tale, she described herself as being shy while "feeling nervous" to approach her male teacher, and she blamed herself for her wandering mind. All of this reinforced the "never quite good enough" notion that lies within a patriarchal universe as suggested by hooks (2002).

In re-reading a teacher's unsettling comments regarding Jasmyn's overall demeanor at school, mixed with Jasmyn's expressed lack of comfort at school, I associated a form of racial typecast. As mentioned in Jasmyn's interpretive tale, one teacher made negative comments and assumptions about Jasmyn. Reyes and Holcon (1997) consider typecasting "a form of covert academic racism based on the belief that 'Hispanics' can and should only occupy minority-related positions" (p. 428). Jasmyn's teacher in this example seemingly grasped for a reason to categorize Jasmyn or identify her with a problem. The most disheartening part of listening to Jasmyn talk about school was the fact that she didn't feel comfortable anywhere in the schooling context. As a result, she turned to drawing and daydreaming as an outlet from being silenced.

In summary, I felt that Jasmyn brought her experiences with Latino gender inequity to school which in turn caused her to appear shy and to feel unvalued. I also felt that due to a lack of cultural competence in some of her teachers, she became the victim of typecasting. Because of Jasmyn's misunderstood demeanor, along with her ethnicity, she was targeted and labeled as "a concern" by an authority figure. Therefore, I considered Jasmyn as being "pushed to the margins" due to the combined inequities of her vulnerable position as a female Latina. Rather, my re-examination of Jasmyns' school experiences revealed her positioning as a "minority of minorities" (Montero-Sieburth, 2000, p. 228). Meaning that, because of her vulnerability of being oppressed through gender and ethnicity, she is selectively excluded from even the minimal benefits awarded to some minorities.

Carlos: Linguistic Capital

All of my participants were bilingual Spanish/English speakers. Although most of them were proud of their bilingual abilities, they shared many stories about the "language barrier" between parents and schoolwork or the communication between parents and younger siblings. Carlos, however, was the only participant who approached his bilingualism more positively in a real life context. I briefly touched on the topic of language brokering in Carlos' interpretive tale in order to represent his bilingualism as an asset that was useful to him and his family. In my re-examination of Carlos' story, I continued to focus on his bilingualism by making connections to the intellectual demands associated with translation work that go unrecognized in the context of his schooling.

Translating is a common occurrence among children of immigrant parents. Latino/a students translate in a variety of settings including schools, banks, restaurants, and healthcare offices. A considerable amount of intellectual tasks are required for translation work, yet the skills remain unrecognized and under utilized in schools. Bilingual students bring a breadth of intellectual skills to schools due to their experiences with translation, yet schools do not value them. Carlos referred to himself as "the translator for the family," implying that such skills were valued outside of the context of school. One study focused on the perceptions and feelings associated with language brokering and found that both negative and positive feelings were associated with the task (Corona et al., 2012). Fortunately, Carlos' attitude was, "it's actually quite fun!"

In considering Carlos' interpretive story where he was eager to help and where he strived to please his teachers, I wondered if Carlos was searching for the same kind of reciprocal dependency from his school that he received from his family. He searched for a reason his school needed him or depended on him, per se. Faulstich-Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, and Meza (2003) state that, "no single term captures the full range of ways in which U.S. immigrant children use their knowledge of English to take on so-called 'adult' tasks and speak for others" (p. 15) while Faulstich-Orellana (2003) recognize translating skills to include, "vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, 'real-world' literacy skills, math skills, metalinguistic awareness, teaching and tutoring skills, civic and familial responsibility, [and] social maturity" (p. 6). Futhermore, translating includes the "metalinguistic competencies that warrant recognition as a form of 'giftedness'" (Faulstich-Orellana et al., 2003, p. 15) along with vocabulary and skills to communicate across different cultures (Yosso, 2006). Such awareness makes it easier to view the institutional practices that reward students for particular skill sets. For example, Latinos/as are often underrepresented in gifted programs while over-represented in programs for learning disabilities (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomas, 2010). Carlos was not in either type of programming at school during data collection for my study; however, he was in the dual language program the school district offered.

In short, the school district where my study took place offered a dual, Spanish-English, language program that students could enroll in beginning in elementary school. The Spanish speaking students begin the program completely immersed in English instruction and as they progress through school, the instruction is eventually split evenly between the two languages. The same goes for the English speakers, who begin the program completely immersed in Spanish instruction. By the time students attend the intermediate school sites (housing fifth and sixth grades), in the district where this study took place, instruction was in both Spanish and English. At one point during data collection, I had scheduled a brief meeting with Carlos to conduct a member-check. I located him in Science class, which was taught in Spanish at this point for dual-language Spanish speaking students. The class had not quite started, so some students and teachers informally remained in the hallway. As I waited for Carlos, I visited with one of his teachers, and she asked me a few questions about my study. I politely gave her a brief overview and we continued our short visit generally talking about ESL and language learning. The teacher briefly mentioned some of her own observations and concerns about ESL and language learning. Carlos happened to be one of those students she was concerned about.

We didn’t have time to continue our conversation, since she needed to tend to her students. Carlos was politely waiting for me; however, I walked away feeling slightly annoyed that the blame always seemed to fall on language minority students’ “lack of skills.” Did the English speakers ever struggle to learn the academic content language in either language, for example? Building on my conversation with Carlos’ teacher as well as the literature on language brokering, it seemed that the intellectual skills associated with the hybrid language space realistic to the daily lives of multilingual Latino/a students simply went unnoticed. Although family settings differ from school literacy activities where language brokering takes place, Faulstich-Orellano et al. (2003) assert that practices could be made to transform the classroom into a space that “values their [students] work as interpreters” (p. 32).

Chapter five presented both the interpretive tales and the critical tales of Denise, Claudia, Jasmyn, and Carlos thus mirroring the same tale-telling approach as chapter four. Chapters four and five conclude the individual tales of all seven of my participants.

To recap, Denise’s interpretive tale revealed skills of a promising leader. She was serious about school and she had a strong social capital. She mainly needed more time to reflect on newly learned skills, encouragement to read more, and a creative outlet to balance out her academic demands. Denise’s critical tale revealed her struggle to visualize herself as a leader within the context of school because of the absence of Latina contributions to U.S. society in the curriculum, as well as within the overall context of school. Claudia’s interpretive tale revealed a need for an interactive and engaging environment that allowed her to remain focused and actively involved in learning. She also needed access to all available resources at school because of the lack of resources available to her at home. Claudia balanced a demanding schedule between academics and playing competitive soccer, which demonstrated her impressive time management and organizational skills. Claudia’s critical tale revealed her parent’s lack of trust in a school function that was a major component to the sixth grade experience.

The last two participants presented in this chapter were Jasmyn and Carlos. Jasmyn's interpretive tale revealed the need for a student-centered approach to learning, more support in acquiring academic content language, and encouragement from her teachers to continue her desire to develop her writing. On the other hand, Jasmyn's mother supported her creative needs, which helped Jasmyn balance her need to be creative and imaginatively driven with the monotony of the school day. Jasmyn's critical tale revealed a school experience where, combined with inequities associated with gender and ethnicity, she was often labeled as a concern by certain teachers. Finally, Carlos' interpretive tale revealed the need for his teachers to remain mindful of student-teacher engagement. He needed his teachers to approach him and offer support, but he also needed them to encourage him to ask for the help he needed. Carlos was responsible and playful. He sat academic goals for himself and did not let the responsibilities of his family affect his academic responsibilities. Carlos' critical tale revealed that the intellectual demands associated with translating often go unrecognized and are undervalued in the context of school.

The interpretive tale of this study intended to reveal the particular learning needs of multilingual Latino/a students that deserve more attention by educators and stakeholders in today's U.S. public school system. The literature on the schooling experiences of Latinos/as revealed that extra schoolwork help and individualized attention, flexibility with assignments, caring and supportive teachers, a comfortable learning environment, and social capital were some of the learning needs of Latino/a students (Balagna, Young, & Smith, 2013; Barillas-Chon, 2010; Brinegar, 2010; Coleman & Hoffer, 2011; Sosa, 2012). Much of the needs I identified in the individual cases of my participants support the existing literature on Latino/a students' learning needs. Furthermore, the stories included in my individual interpretive tales of my participants, revealed various other needs as well. For example, a more student-centered approach to learning, slower pacing, and more time to develop newly acquired skills were some of the learning needs revealed in the individual stories included in this study. The interpretive tale also intended to identify the learning resources of my participants. Borrowing from Ogbu (1992), the term resources referred to the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors my participants brought to school. Some of the resources revealed in the individual tales of my participants include a supportive family, resourcefulness, bilingualism, hard-working, and individual agency.

Finally, the critical tale of this study intended to reveal the role race plays in the school-based learning experiences of my participants. By utilizing the tenets of LatCrit to highlight the experiences specific to the seven multilingual Latino/a students in my study, various educational and curriculum assumptions were revealed. The critical tales of my participants revealed various forms of Latino/a resistance, issues associated with inferior curriculum, and undervalued skills associated with bilingualism within the context of school.

Chapters four and five conclude the individual tales of my study. In the next chapter I present the cross-case analysis. I continued the format of a tale-telling approach by presenting an interpretive tale and then a second, critical tale. Chapter six therefore concludes the data analysis of my study.

CHAPTER VI

THE CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Working within the hermeneutic circle furthermore aided in the synthesis of my data in which I conducted cross-case analysis (Yin, 2003) to identify any similarities or differences in my data set. At this stage, it became clear that the participants' stories, previously grouped into various themes, were both literally and figuratively framed around a *construct of place*. For example, I began to see how each participant expressed his or her identity in relation to their experiences at school. I could see how the emotional and social significance of their relationships developed within the context of school. I began to see the multiple meanings *school as place* represented for each participant. I could also see how they continually shifted in and out of mainstream, school life and the cultural and ethnic life of their families. As a result, I created theme titles out of a *construct of place* in an attempt to illustrate the common thread from which my participants' ideas were framed.

My themes are presented next. Each section begins with a theme title, followed by a presentation of the analysis through an interpretive tale. The intent of this reading highlights an understanding of the everyday experiences of the participants. Excerpts of the data that share a common theme are carefully woven through each tale. The second part of this chapter presents the critical reading of my themes as I move to the critical cross-case analysis.

Emergent Themes

Theme I: A Landscape of Meanings- Understanding *School as Place*

In an interest in understanding the participants' school-based experiences, I began with the literal interpretation of *school as place*. How my participants conceptualized school as a place in general has emerged as an important theme. Some of the participants specifically defined school in a basic, almost predictable sense, while others utilized an analogy to describe it. My participants talked about school, in its most general sense, by defining school as a place to learn and a place to make friends. While they clearly expressed their definition of school in its most basic sense, another important meaning was portrayed. Participants talked about school within the overall context of preparation for later in life. For example, Claudia said, "it helps you learn, like in the future to go to college and to get a job" and Rosa said, "kids can like learn a lot and they can be smarter when they grow up." All of my participants conceptualized school as a place to prepare for adult life. Alecia connected later in life to growing up and having kids and how being in school now possibly prepared her to help her own children prepare for their school life. In talking about teaching children of her own she was referring to early childhood education, meaning that she would be better equipped to prepare her own children for their K-12 schooling. A pattern became evident. The purpose of the early childhood years, most commonly noted as birth through three or four years of age, is to prepare for K-12 schooling. Additionally, the purpose of K-12 schooling is to prepare for adulthood. Through the excerpts of my participants, it became clear how narrow the focus of education has become, or at least the parochial impression students are left with, although they do not necessarily recognize it as such. Influences stemming this view come from an educational system that is situated in a capitalist society whose values align with mastery and are competitive in nature. Additionally, a climate of increased anti-immigrant sentiment paired with the adoption of national curriculum and assessments, further added to the structural and social influences that define such narrow views of schooling. The educational discourse in the U.S. is saturated with accountability and test scores. As many curriculum theorists would contend, deeper questions about schooling and its purpose need to be asked (Aoki, 2004; Noddings, 2003; Pinar, 2004).

Some of my participants associated various feelings with their experiences at school. For example, Miguel believed “it’s a healthier life [to stay in school]” yet emphasized how he felt when he did not understand a particular academic skill stating, “when I don’t know something, that’s when I’m in the frustrated zone and when I get frustrated I just like, zone out and I start to forget things.” Revisiting Denise’s jail analogy, she explained:

> Feeling frustrated is like being in jail because like, if you have already had two or three classes and they were hard, and you couldn’t understand the lesson or something like that… you get really frustrated and you feel trapped.

Denise felt trapped at times, as if there was no escape and although she was not expressing her frustration with particular classes or teachers, it became clear that more work could be done on supporting the emotional needs of students, such as taking a holistic approach to aid students in healthy ways to deal with various emotions and feelings associated with their learning experiences. When students, particularly multilingual Latino/a students, are invited to speak about their relation to school and their experiences at school, individual identities and cultural meanings can emerge, therefore allowing a concretely lived place to speak to us (Aoki, 2004). It was also important to consider the uniqueness of adolescence in my analysis. For example Chip Wood (2015) maintains that adolescents of many ages, particularly twelves, “probably do not belong in formal school environments at all” (p. 143). I began to see and furthermore understand the way in which a relationship with *place* developed out of the culmination of their experiences.

Finally, Carlos recounted a story of recognition. In his good nature, he completed the writing prompt that also included a drawing. He wrote about his best day of school:

> It was the day after my birthday and I thought my week couldn’t get any better. We had an assembly at school that day. I was just sitting and watching and listening. Then I heard

> my name! I ran really excitedly down from the bleachers. I was so happy! I won the prize for perseverance!

His drawing was of the medal he received that day. The silver medal included an engraved school logo with the word *perseverance* engraved underneath it. It hung from a ribbon coordinated with the school district's colors and logo, and was meant to be worn around the neck. He received the award during the current school year so I assumed he still had it. When I asked him if he had his medal, he replied with an enthusiastic "yes" through a wide grin of sparkling metal. I sensed the excitement from receiving the award remained present, even though it had been a couple of months since the assembly. This story captured the significance that recognition from teachers had for Carlos.

Jennifer Ayala and Anne Galletta's (2009) study suggests what they call, "shifts in the language of students" (p. 199), where a shift from an institutionalized agency of possibility to a personal agency within the structure of school occurs. In my study, both Alecia and Carlos revealed a shift in agency. As revealed in Carlos's story about the special needs boy during recess, he understood the importance of feeling like one belonged and had fair opportunities at school, thus he took action to make sure a peer felt accepted. He had more than likely experienced the same need to feel a sense of belonging at school himself, thus wanted to ensure that same feeling for a peer. Furthermore, Alecia considered school as a place that was preparing her for adulthood and made the connection that she will be better equipped to prepare her own children for school and society. The "shift," according to Ayala and Galletta (2009), was from what Carlos and Alecia's school did for them, to what they did for their school or what they understood was possible for them to achieve within the context of *school as place*.

This theme attempted to describe the participant's relationship to *school as place* through the accumulation of their experiences at school, and my interpreted meanings of those experiences. Through this free act of seeing meaning (van Manen, 1990), insightful discoveries of place meanings were addressed. I realized that accumulated school experiences, when conceptualized as part of a person's history of being in school, was a useful indicator of place meaning. The collection of my participants' experiences included a mix of both positive and negative interactions with school that stemmed from vulnerability to perseverance. Through their narratives and within the context of *school as place*, expressions of frustration, the importance of feeling a sense of belonging, student agency, preparation for adulthood, as well as recognition were revealed.

Theme II: Interpersonal Relationships in Place

In keeping within the common thread of my themes, which were created around the construct of place, next I present the interpersonal relationships that developed for my participants within the context of school. To reiterate, this theme centered on the emotional and social significance of my participants relationships. As I see it, attempting to understand the interpersonal relationships of my participants also contributed to their understandings of *school as place*. These themes can be understood individually and as interrelated. Utilizing a construct of place as an interpretational approach and as a linking thread through my themes aided in the meaningful examination of my participants' stories, and thus allowed a more creative way to think about the experiences of multilingual Latino/a students' experiences. In presenting the narratives for my next theme, it is my hope to demonstrate how place connections often required engaging with others who are in that particular setting.

When my participants talked about teachers, their stories demonstrated relations of reciprocity and expressed the need for emotional support from teachers. I am reminded of Noddings' (2003) argument for a serious examination of what goes on in schools. The stories my participants shared, demonstrated the significant impact on students when teachers gave attention to the quality of students' present experiences, a recommendation of Noddings' (2003) work. The emotional and social experiences that developed within the context of school were valuable in understanding the views of students. Miguel, Alecia, and Denise shared experiences of their relationships with teachers of a more personal nature; however, Valenzuela's (1999) study found that only a few teachers knew their students in a personal way, and that only a few students would reach out to their teachers for help with a personal problem. On one hand, my participants did not seem to express any unwillingness to reach out to teachers, but as our conversations developed throughout the interviews, I found that there were times when students did not want to reach out to teachers, which I will discuss later within this theme. Overall, my participants expressed a sense of mutual caring between themselves and their teachers. As Miguel stated, "teachers are one of the most greatest helps. When you grow up you will remember your teachers and they can be the ones who helped you, like a friend."

My participants also expressed their fear or lack of self-confidence in initiating helpful engagement from their teachers. Therefore, I asked if they could talk about how they handled these situations, or rather, how they got the help they needed when they were stuck on a particular problem or question. Their responses overwhelmingly pointed to the need for teachers to initiate helpful engagement with students, rather than the teacher assuming a student was unmotivated, lacked the skills to complete an academic task, or simply didn't need support (Valenzuela, 1999). Denise, Miguel, Carlos, and Rosa offered different responses. For example, Miguel felt comfortable and safe when his teachers offered him encouragement. He stated, "they [teachers] can give you positive peer pressure and say, come on you can do it!" Such shared experiences seemed to expand my participant's knowledge about reciprocity and how to socially interact within the context of school.

Within the theme of Interpersonal Relationships in Place, I have presented the importance of relationships between students and teachers at school. My participants described teachers as friends, someone to trust with a personal issue, and as someone from whom they needed continual confirmation and reassurance for academic support. Much of what I have presented is reiterated through the literature and indicated that students' academic success and motivation were influenced by authentic student-teacher relationships and a sense of belonging (Garza &

Soto Huerta, 2014; Noddings, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). The topic of bullying, however, revealed an intriguing contradiction.

Throughout much of the interviews, my participants mostly expressed their support for communicative student-teacher relationships; however, the focus group interview centered on the topic of bullying and revealed a different response from the participants. Miguel, Claudia, Denise, and Carlos participated in the focus group interview. It is within this discussion that a shift occurs from the interpersonal relationships of students and teachers to some of the interpersonal relationships between students and their peers, alongside their desire to keep such issues between students. We sat around a table in an unused classroom during a time in the school day when all four of my participants were available to meet and were not missing instructional time. It was after their lunch block so they were full of energy and comfortably interacted, laughing and joking around with each other as their conversations from the events of lunch carried over. They smelled like the outdoors as the warmth of the sun still radiated from their bodies and beads of sweat accumulated around each of their hairlines. Luckily I had small water bottles and a piece of chocolate for each of them. I experienced brief moments of anxiousness, as I began to doubt my facilitation skills for managing the logistics of group conversation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). This interview was different than what I had experienced conducting individual interviews. Fortunately, they settled down and became focused on me.

I began by asking the group where bullying occurred most of the time, expecting them to name a form of social media. My assumption was proven wrong when they told me the most common places for bullying to occur were the bus, the restroom, outside during lunch break, and outside of school property or school hours. Therefore, with the exception of the last place, all of the places they named were school based and access to teachers or other adults in supervisory roles were usually available. I reminded them that in some of our previous conversations they stated that involving adults often made bullying situations worse and I posed the following questions, “how could bullying be prevented and/or handled if adults or teachers did not get involved? How do you, as students, prevent or help bullying issues in school?" Surprisingly they each responded with seemingly basic, matter of fact responses. Claudia believed in standing up for her peers by telling bullies to leave people alone. Miguel blurted, "don't show them fear," Denise exuberantly stated, "ignore them," and Carlos elaborated:

> I agree with Miguel, don't show them fear… like if they [bullies] are saying stuff to you or doing stuff to you, just tell them that it is not affecting you and then they will probably keep trying but they will give up.

I began to wonder if teachers and other adults were making a bigger issue out of bullying than necessary, while at the same time a shadow of concern lingered with me. I feared students might not always recognize when bullying occurred.

All four of my participants shook their head in agreement to not involving adults after Miguel shared a story about the conflict between him and a particular fourth grader on the bus. Claudia spoke up adding, "they [adults] make it [the bullying situation] worse." My participants talked about some of the reasons they don't involve adults and they are within the context of how they are perceived by their peers. For example, my participants did not want to be labeled as a "tattletale," a "snitch," or as "someone who gossips." They also expressed their disapproval for how adults handled bullying situations, most notably expressing that the adults didn't do anything about it. There was also a discrepancy between the involvement of teachers and the involvement of parents. For example, Denise thought involving teachers was better than involving parents because, "teachers can put bullies into detention or get them expelled" while Carlos thought, "parents make too much of a big deal out of a situation." All of the participants shook their head in agreement with Carlos while Claudia also claimed that she didn't like to involve teachers.

While we continued to talk about the issue of bullying and the involvement of adults, it was obvious that Miguel felt passionate about the topic. Although the other three participants equally contributed to the conversation, Miguel demonstrated the most confidence in expressing his perspective, thus offering valuable insight into why students disapproved of the way adults handled conflicts between students. Miguel, consciously trying not to dominate the group's conversation yet anxious to speak, elaborated:

> So I think adults make it worse because when you are in a situation and they get involved, they want you to like shake hands with the person and they make you become friends. I don't think that is a fair way to handle it. I think you should spend time away from the person, but adults want you to like hug each other and stuff.

He continued:

> I don't like to bring adults into problems because when the adults come in… how do I explain it… Okay, so they weren't there to see anything so they cannot believe anything. If the kids wanted to they could just say that we punched them and the teacher would take a long time to figure out what happened so I don't like to bring teachers into it.

When the participants talked about their relationships within the context of school, they expressed a need for the emotional support from teachers while they also expressed times of resistance in the involvement of teachers in potential, emotionally problematic situations. The intention of this theme centered on the emotional and social significance of the relationships my participants experienced at school. Being in a school setting situated the students and their peers in a place where they were forced to become intimately aware of the structural and social conditions operating there. Although the participants often expressed disapproval of how teachers handled conflicts between students, their stories pointed to the need for teachers to initiate intervention. Similar to how the participants were often too embarrassed to ask for academic support, I wondered if my participants felt the same when it came to bullying types of conflict. Understanding my participant's interpersonal relationships through the construct of place seemed to hold a type of meaning for them where they were constantly juggling positionality and striving to make sense of it.

Theme III: Place Value- Expressing Identity

For the third theme, I considered how each participant expressed identity in relation to the nature of their experiences at school. I continued to utilize the construct of *place* to understand how my participants identified the self in relation to place. I also considered their age and the unique stages of adolescence. Borrowing from Wood (2015), "twelve is the confusing struggle for identity…" (p. 144). Thus, aiding in my understanding of the means by which my participants constructed place identities and also helped me to resist the idea that school-based learning experiences are universal. In their study of pathways to success and assimilation, Zhou and Lee (2007) found that "the process of identity formation is highly affected by place and context" (p. 199). I found that my participants created storied accounts of their identities at school. For some, this meant reflecting on what they saw in other students, while other accounts emerged out of descriptions of family.

I begin with Rosa, who in recalling the initial impression of my participants, identified herself as Mexican immediately. Rosa's expression of identity emerged out of a descriptive statement about her parents and is projected in how she views her future self. She explained:

> I want to be a lawyer. I see my parents, like when they have trouble with the law, so most people like didn't really want to help my parents with their problems so I just want to help people that actually need the help, but can't get it… Like, my mom, she gets stopped and she gets a lot of tickets and then she has to go to court…

I did not prompt Rosa to go into details about her parent's trouble with the law; however, Rosa expressed a need for purposeful help and she saw herself as capable of offering that help some day. Other narratives of Rosa's that were used in previous themes hint at purposeful help too, by way of her preference for individual attention by teachers or teacher aides. Rosa continued to express her identity through descriptions of her parents throughout data collection. For example, an art project she was working on at the time reflected what her parents do for a living. In a previous conversation with Rosa, she told me that her parents sold cars. The drawings for her art project were of cars. For Rosa, school is a place where a family self, a student self, and a career self integrates (Quiroz, 2001) and is expressed. Miguel, in his numerous references to his father, also expressed an identity at school through descriptions of a parent. In recalling the literature on identity, Zhou and Lee (2007) claimed that, "perhaps most importantly, non-White racial/ethnic minorities are subject to outsiders' ascription: the way in which others perceive them affects and limits how they choose to identify themselves" (p. 198). Therefore, Rosa and Miguel may have felt limited in their choices of identity expression and relied mostly on an identity constructed through their parents.

Denise and Claudia compared themselves to their peers who they perceived as being at different stages in their academic skills at school or who they compared their behaviors to in school. Identity formation is a dialectical process that involves both internal and external opinions and processes, involving both what *you* think your identity is and what *they* think it is (Nagel, 1994). Although both participants considered themselves as good students in their academic performance at school, they both expressed a keen awareness of their lack of self-confidence as readers by directly comparing themselves to their peers. Meanwhile, Jasmyn continued to express her free-spirited character throughout data collection, but she also compared her capabilities in a particular subject to that of her peers. In a discussion about her elective music class she recalled, "I'm kind of ahead of my classmates in that class because I already know how to read sheet music." Jasmyn expressed a confident self because she viewed herself as being more skilled than her peers in a particular subject. Reflecting on their experiences in school and pondering their positions relative to others contributed to their place identity. I found this to be relevant not only in how my participants expressed their identity of academic performance but also by comparing ones behavior in place to others.

Carlos assumed the identity of the well-behaved student. He described his behavior in classes stating,

> I make good choices to be a good student. Sometimes I don't sit by people that would distract me because sometimes I'm one of those people who can get distracted. Also,

> since I don't sit by people who would distract me, I don't play around as much. I do play around but only at the right times.

Carlos expressed his identity at school by reflecting on what he saw others doing in the classroom. The focus of this theme centered around my participants' constructed place identities as expressed through their experiences at school. Some of my participants expressed their identities through descriptions of their parents or their parents' experiences while other participants constructed identities based on the academic or behavioral observations of their peers. Understanding how my participants' schooling experiences contributed to the formation and expression of identity provided a better understanding of their behaviors in school. In framing school as a place in which certain identities were expressed, I continued to question how the relationship between my participants expressed identities and school as a place may become inseparable from my participant's relationship with or sense of value of the concept of education. The boundaries between self-identities and the identities they express at school may blur as the relationship between their experiences and identities continue to establish over time, in a place such as school.

Theme IV: (Dis)placed- Navigating Two Worlds

The final, fourth theme focused on the ways in which my participants continually negotiated the ebb and flow of their schooling experiences and their cultural, linguistic, or social and economic mobility. Most of my participants expressed the necessity for resourcefulness in completing homework assignments due to the language barriers and educational levels of their parents. Other navigations comprised of examples of my participants having to take on the role of an adult, while others shared stories of cultural stigmas from their peers. I begin with a casual comment that almost went unnoticed at the beginning of a focus group interview with Denise, Claudia, Miguel, and Carlos. Before the interview began I had set out small water bottles for each of them and I planned to give them each a small, chocolate treat. In U.S. public schools today, it is often customary to confirm the absence of any peanut allergies. They settled into their seats as I gave them permission to drink the water and proceeded to ask if anybody in the room had a peanut allergy. Most of them giggled as their eyes widened at the sight of my hands pulling out small chocolate bars from my bag. Miguel threw his hands up sarcastically stating, "I don't know any Mexicans that are allergic to peanuts!" They all laughed and shook their heads in agreement as Denise interrupted "yeah, that's an American thing."

Although the prior is an example of attaching their own social stigma to "Americans," they shared a story of a social stigma they experienced from being "Mexican." Embedded in a conversation about bullying during lunch break, Claudia told a story about a female peer hassling her about soccer:

> Outside, during our lunch break one day we were playing soccer and there was this girl who was like 'you suck at soccer, my grandma kicks better than you.' Then she started saying stuff like, 'I thought Mexicans were supposed to be good at soccer' and stuff like that…

Following Claudia's statement, Miguel continued:

> "I have to add to what Claudia said. So right after that girl started saying that, it [soccer game] turned mostly into like Mexicans against Whites and it went on for almost a week."

They carried on about how they "dominated" or "whooped" the other team, however the story they shared was an example of the cultural and ethnic stigma experienced by Latino/a students from their White counterparts in school. This narrative demonstrated my participant's awareness of living on the margins (Quiroz, 2001) as they negotiated the struggles of Latino/a ethnicity in a culturally, American dominated school system.

In listening to my participants talk about their schoolwork and asking them to share an overview of their daily, afterschool routines, I was struck by their resourcefulness in seeking homework help. Mostly, they discussed being unable to rely on their parents for help with homework. For example, Miguel said, "I sometimes take advantage that the teachers are there to help me because at home, like mostly nobody at my house understands English except my older sister." The efforts my participants expressed in getting the help they needed to do homework was impressive and demonstrated not only their willingness to take responsibility for their academics but also their desire to succeed in school. Not unlike the findings in Balagna, Young, and Smith's (2013) study, participants reported highly valuing their peers or other student family members for most of their academic support.

Not only did my participants discuss their own means of academic support, they briefly alluded to the fact that they were often the ones helping their younger siblings with homework. Denise said, "I help my younger siblings a lot with homework" and Claudia too said, "at home we have books that are for my little sister, like little kid books, and I'm the one that has to read them to her… It's kind of annoying." The experiences described here demonstrated the responsible behaviors of my participants and the adult like roles they sometimes were required to maintain in place of their parents. Insofar, my participants expressed the ways in which they actively sought out support for their own academics and they shared how they were often the academic support for the younger children in their lives. All of which were due to a language barrier between Latino/a parents and the school world of their children.

Carlos and Miguel also shared about times they acted in an authority role in order to help their parents. I was struck by both Miguel and Carlos' feelings of enthusiasm for helping their parents as I remained impressed by their ability to successfully manage the demands of their own schooling, along with their cultural community forces. The narratives shared here demonstrated the ability of Latino/a students and families to cross cultural and language boundaries, adjust well in school, and succeed academically (Ogbu, 1992). At times the dualistic realities of my participants' lives was amusing, while other times it was painstakingly forlorn. Alecia talked about her favorite television shows, one of which was on the Spanish television channel Univision and titled, *Mi Corazon Estoy* (My Heart is Yours) while the other was a part of pop culture's current fascination with zombies and titled, *The Walking Dead*. Meanwhile, by the time

I conducted a second interview with my participant Rosa, her dad had to return to Mexico because of legal problems. He had already been gone for almost a month and his prospective return was three months away, but the timing was not definite.

The title of my fourth and last theme, (Dis)placed: Navigating Two Worlds, was not meant to imply a dualistic interpretation to the daily lives and experiences of my participants. In fact Rosa, Denise, Claudia, Miguel, Alecia, Jasmyn, and Carlos were likely navigating multiple worlds that required excursions through gendered, political, religious, and/or economic realities, to name a few. The intent of this theme was to highlight how ethnicity operates in U.S. society and how students are situated because of it, aiding in the creation of liberating learning environments that allow students to successfully transition to and from family and community to the world of school (Quiroz, 2001).

In review of my interpretive cross-case analysis, I presented four themes which I framed around a *construct of place* and utilized as a common thread through each theme. In the first theme, I attempted to understand the multiple meanings school as *place* represented for each of my participants. The second theme represented the emotional and social significance relating to my participant's engagement with teachers and peers within a school setting. For my third theme, I focused on the participants' expressed identities in relation to their experiences at school. The fourth theme concluded my interpretive cross-case analysis by focusing on the ways in which my participants navigated through the cultural and academic demands of school life with that of the cultural and community demands of their families. In short, I utilized a *construct of place* as a language for understanding (Smith, 1991), hermeneutically, the school-based learning experiences of seven, multilingual Latino/a students. The presentation of my interpretive tale aimed to immerse the reader into the adolescent realities of the participants, as if they were characters in a novel. I used rich descriptions while attempting to reveal the particular learning needs and resources expressed in my participants' narratives. Furthermore, the learning needs and resources that were revealed in my participant's individual case, allowed me to synthesize the individual cases into my themes. The participants' narratives were utilized verbatim in an attempt to respect each participant as a unique and valued experiencer of his or her world (Greene & Hill, 2005) while carefully weaving my own interpretation and multiplicity of understanding.

Next, I present the analysis through a critical tale. The intent of this reading was to interrupt the interpretive tale with a theoretical approach that reveals subtle inequalities that are assumed to exist for Latino/a students. My hope in using a tale-telling approach to present the data through two layers of analysis was to demonstrate both the possibilities and the complexities within data presentation. The presentation of the critical tale consists mostly of my voice as I aimed to critically analyze, recalling on the data presented in the interpretive tale.

The Critical Cross-case Analysis

Theme I: Assimilation Processes and Resistance

Understanding the school experiences particular to Latino/a students is a complex issue; however, utilizing the lens of LatCrit theory can examine the intersection of racism, language, or other forms of subordination within the dominant discourse of educational institutions. Analysis of the data in my first theme, indicated that processes of assimilation and resistance took place. Although assimilation is not necessarily viewed negatively, marginalized groups often experience assimilation along with a loss of some of their own cultural characteristics. S*chool as a place* also became a contested site in which participants demonstrated resistance. In this re-reading, I framed my understanding of *school as place* as an indication of both assimilationist discourse and resistance taking place in the storied accounts of my participants.

Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) found assimilationist discourse to affirm the message that to get ahead in the United States, one must assimilate. Bourdieu (1977) adds to this idea, linking the belief that American culture and language is the key to gaining cultural capital. Thus, the message of Americanization is filtered down and "recycled" (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008, p. 34) in the very narratives of Latino/a students. A clear indication of assimilationist discourse was represented in Miguel's recollection of his mother's educational history. He recalled, "my mom would always tell us don't drop out, don't be like me because we're not in Mexico anymore so you can do okay." In analyzing Miguel's transcript, the U.S. school experience was portrayed as superior to the school experience in Mexico. Miguel's mother obviously valued education and it was evident in the value Miguel placed on his academic performance at school; however, I also found an element of underlying deficit belief towards schools in Mexico, thus taking away any responsibility of U.S. schools for Latino/a dropouts.

My participants framed school as preparation for future life, defined as attending college and obtaining a better job. Alecia stated that school is "a great opportunity to learn" but "you have to concentrate and not slack off to be a great student." Alecia correlated "being a great student" to "being very successful later in life." Miguel framed school as "a healthier life" while Carlos beamed in the recognition of perseverance. Their comments revealed the value their families place on hard work and education, which afforded my participants a cultural resource they brought with them to school. On the one hand, the participants expressed a sense of themselves as agents whose actions, such as perseverance and hard work, make an impact for themselves and the world. On the other hand, school can represent an unhealthy environment for Latino/a students if they are continually absorbing the message that "being a good student" and persevering will automatically grant them success in life. Therefore tensions existed between the participants' processes of assimilation and participants' resistance in the form of student agency. In other words, participants' efforts to enact agency and the school's effort to support them inherently created difficult and disjointed spaces full of tension that Holland et al. (1998) refers to as "contested space, a space of struggle" (p. 282).

An example is in Valenzuela's (1999) work of subtractive schooling practices leaving Latino/a youth vulnerable to academic failure. Many of my participants relied on the bus for transportation to and from school, which was fraught with behavioral issues like bullying. Nathanial Jackson and Angel Perez (2012) posit that, "Hispanic students do not even enjoy full access into open-door institutions" (p. 59). For example, Miguel's parents contacted the school to visit with the principal about an issue, but they were ignored. Miguel stated, "my parents have called the school about bullying because they wanted to set up a meeting with the principal. The school never did anything." In Miguel's story, his parents reached out to the school, yet they were left to resolve the issue without the support from the school. My participants also deserved credit for how resourceful they were in dealing with their homework demands with limited resources. Holland et al. (1998) describe agency as involving individuals' sense of themselves whose actions count in and account for the world. Although subtle, my participants enacted a sense of agency in their daily lives. Their subtle acts deserved attention because it revealed the interplay between their human agency and the contextual constraints of *school as place*.

All of my participants had to, at one point or another, become creative at finding homework help that was often the result of a language barrier between the people closest to them and their schoolwork. For example, Denise "goes to her cousin's house" to get help with homework, Claudia "asks her older sister" for help, and Alecia uses Skype with her friends. Michael Olivas' (1983) work highlights the fact that as a minority group, Latino/a students don't have a network of traditionally Hispanic colleges as compared to other minority groups in the United States, such as African-Americans and Native Americans. My intent was to highlight the ways in which my participants enact agency by drawing attention to their capacity to be critical and active participants in the world, which often goes unseen. Perseverance is not always the gateway to the "American dream;" however, the resourcefulness and student agency revealed in my participants stories, arguably account for their networking efforts.

A gap exists between cultural preparation of mainstream White students and Latino/a students. My participants' first language, Spanish, was not actively maintained by the school even though the school promoted bilingualism by requiring students to enroll in a foreign language course. Alecia's story revealed the off-putting pressures that exist to conform to the linguistic superiority of speaking English. Alecia sadly stated that, "my parents will have to learn English because my little sister doesn't speak Spanish, she speaks only English." Her example portrayed how the English-only model enters the household of such families, thus overvaluing English acquisition and development. Furthermore, Spanish as a first language was undervalued. As evident in the structure of the curriculum and the courses offered, the bilingual skills of my participants were not equal to the promotion of becoming bilingual as a first language English speaker. Meaning that, all of my participants successfully assimilated to the dominant language and while bilingualism was promoted through course offerings, the already acquired bilingual skills of my participants were not necessarily recognized or praised in the context of school.

A critical stance embodies the cultural and linguistic diversity as valuable resources rather than purporting neutrality. For example, my participants were all bilingual Spanish/English speakers although their fluency varied. Claudia stated, "I speak both Spanish and English, and I read and write in both." Miguel stated, "my goal is to stay in school and get a good job. I have no doubts of me succeeding because I know two languages and I know English really well." Although both Claudia and Miguel value their language abilities, when I asked them if they used both languages at school they said, "not really" or "mostly English." Unless the U.S. adds Spanish as an official language, Miguel's statement clearly indicated that the English language was superior; a reality that students must face. Miguel recognized the benefits of speaking both languages and maintaining his English fluency. In terms of agency, Miguel understood bilingualism as a facility for the possibility of transformative action, aiding him with success in the future. Rosa also enacted agency by utilizing her parent's experiences with the U.S. legal system to envision herself as a critical and active participant and acted upon the personal and social issues relevant to her.

The collective analysis of my participants' narratives revealed a pattern expressing the belief that a well- behaved, "good student" who perseveres through challenges leads to success as an adult. Such norms are similar to many other cultures including the Chinese culture, for example. Assimilationist discourse is often referred to in the literature as abstract attitudes in the belief that anyone can enjoy success by performing well in school (Goldsmith, 2004; Mickelson, 1990). For example, Carlos and Miguel demonstrated their continuous motivation to be good students and leaders throughout the study. Carlos wanted everyone to be treated fairly, sharing that, “me and Miguel stood up for him [boy]” and “our teacher told us good job.” Carlos sought his teachers’ approval through a desire to receive recognition for good behavior. The perseverance displayed by Carlos was also a way he enacted agency. In terms of his good behavior and standing up for his peers, Carlos expressed a sense of himself as someone who could actively make a difference in the social climate of the school. Jasmyn and Claudia both believed that, “school is good for you because you can learn things for later in life and get a job” and “it helps you learn, and to go to college and get a job.” Through the brief transcripts I included in my critical reading of *school as place*, my participants indicated assimilationist discourse through the idea that to get ahead in the United States, one had to assimilate.

Through re-examining their experiences of language use and the purpose of being a “good student” and behaving well served, I focused on the interplay of assimilationist practices and students’ sense of agency in an attempt to bring their cultural and linguistic resources to the forefront. Drawing on participant’s background knowledge and experiences could ultimately serve to enhance their learning experiences in school. For example, soccer was a popular part of many of the participants’ Mexican heritage. Many of them had family and community experiences engaging in games of soccer, thus affording them a cultural bridge with other peers at school. Soccer could easily be incorporated as a learning tool that builds upon both the cultural and linguistic resources of my participants. Focusing on these contested spaces further illuminated the linguistic and cultural reality my participants and their families experienced on a daily basis. Analyzing the interplay of assimilation and resistance also revealed how the participants’ experiences functioned to shape, limit, and/or facilitate their participation in spaces of struggle.

Theme II: Interpersonal Relationships in Place as Ongoing Negotiations

Powerlessness refers to instances or perceptions of student alienation or lack of control in the schooling experience and more precisely interpersonal relationships within the context of school. The critical, re-reading of my second theme considered the ongoing negotiations between students and the intentions and constraints of their peers, teachers, and the overall context of school. In the critical, individual tales I presented ways in which some of my participants displayed various modes of resistance and enacted agency. In my critical cross-case analysis, I considered such forms of resistance as coping strategies from the powerlessness or lack of control my participants experienced in their interpersonal relationships within the context of school. I also considered how some of these instances evoked my participant's active understanding and imagining of change. Holland et al. (1998) argued that, "human agency may be frail, especially those with little power, but it happens daily and mundanely, and it deserves attention" (p. 5). Latino/a students enter school already "lacking power" because of their language, class, and in some cases, gender. The scholarly work of Angela Valenzuela (2005) embodies this notion, positing that Latino/a students and their parents have no control over school curriculum or assessments. Meanwhile, Bussert-Webb's (2009) study focusing on Latino/a children's school experiences found that participants perceived they "were acted upon versus co-constructors of knowledge" (p. 51). In re-reading the participants' experiences in my study, I found similarities between my data and what has been documented in existing literature.

Participants in my study overwhelmingly expressed the need for teachers to initiate helpful engagement with students because they were either too fearful to ask for help, they did not find the help useful, or the teacher simply did not respond appropriately. A good example was in Rosa's writing prompt where her teacher did not respond appropriately to her needs, resulting in her "worst day of school." My participants' lack of confidence or presence of shyness was re-read as situations of alienation and powerlessness. For example, Jasmyn admitted that she was quiet and shy in class, which I correlated to Latino gender inequity in her critical, individual tale; however, she added an almost unnoticed statement at the end of our conversation stating, "I do talk a lot at home." I considered this statement an example of powerlessness in the context of school. Second, the fact that some participants felt that the teachers' help was not useful relates to the lack of voice Latino/a groups, in general, face in the schooling context. My participants did not feel as if they were co-constructors of knowledge. In a follow up question during our conversation about teachers Jasmyn stated, "teachers could sometimes be fun." I asked her if teaching and fun were two separate things and she replied with a dull, "yeah."

Rosa also revealed perceptions of powerlessness and a lack of co-construction with her teachers and the curriculum. She recalled,

> I was in class and I didn't know what we were doing. I got super bored and tired so I fell asleep (laugh). Then my teacher woke me up and she was like, "what's the answer to this problem?" I was like "ugh" but I remembered I had already written it down so I just looked off my paper and gave her the answer.

Rosa's story clearly described her detachment from what she was learning in class and the mundane response to her teacher's request revealed a meager interest in the learning content. Continuing our conversation about school, Rosa described her ideal version of the structure of school:

> I wish kids could take a break every once in a while, like get up and start moving. There should be an area where kids can go and take a break and then come back to class. It would be a lounge, like a student lounge. Kids could stay there, sit down, or do whatever they want like play games. Then once you feel like coming back to class, you are just ready to learn.

Rosa's description of school revealed her desire to have a sense of autonomy in the structure of her learning. Rosa became an agent for change as she imagined another possibility for the structuring of school. She became a critical thinker, utilizing her relational experiences at school as a tool to analyze the social and structural issues that were relevant to her at the time. Other participants' stories revealed similar desires. Similar to Rosa, Claudia and Alecia expressed their desire for more unstructured time at school, such as more lunch or recess. I recalled the research on developmental ages and stages conducted by Wood (2015) positing that, “twelves’ greatest need is to be with their friends” (p. 144). Their expressed desires for more unstructured time at school led me to conclude that they were more ready to focus and likely to engage with their teachers and in their learning content if the structure of school allowed for students to engage and disengage as they needed. When I asked Alecia if there was anything she would change about school she added, “I would like to have a little more free time but I would probably add a fun way to learning. Like, make it more fun.” I prompted her to give me an example. She stated,

> I read this article that said this one school, I think in Chicago, used the game Minecraft in many subjects like, Social Studies and Math. So I think that’s probably one way to improve school a little bit. Like, in Math with Minecraft, you have to estimate how many bricks you need to build something. So I think that would be a fun way to learn in Math.

Alecia’s story revealed a desire to construct knowledge through a learning mode that was fun and appealing to her as a student. In terms of agency, Alecia utilized her knowledge about a popular video game she enjoyed playing to facilitate another possibility for transforming mathematical learning in school. Jasmyn shared a similar preference for learning,

> Social Studies is kind of boring. I like when we use this website where we have to read and then answer questions. The part where we answer questions is fun for me ‘cause I can type and see my answers… the website is kind of teaching you, instead of the teacher teaching.

Each of my participants’ stories presented here, revealed student agency in both the way they constructed knowledge and also in the lack of freedom they had to engage and disengage in their learning or with their teachers. They each became critical and active thinkers in their imaginations of school with possible transformative effects in student learning. Fostering participants’ sense of agency presents a sense of possibility for meaningful and personal authoring of their own school experiences. Resulting in an image of what school and learning might look like and might mean for my participants. A good example of minority students' and parents' lack of control in the curriculum exists in Hilliard's (2002) suggestion of the absurdity of treating basic word lists, such as spelling words or sight word lists, as "universally valid" or lacking in ambiguity (p. 99). Moreover, my analysis considered how the same individuals can demonstrate human agency in some contexts while assuming a powerless stance in other contexts. In terms of agency, it is an unstable and immutable construct that is a rather fluid aspect of identity and continues to develop over time (Holland, 2003). Rosa comes to mind when considering the contradictory nature of agency among participants. For example, she sometimes acted out in class when she was not engaged or understanding the lesson's content. On the others hand, she clearly enacted a sense of agency in her desire to improve legal situations in the U.S. for people like her parents and in her imagining of a different school structure.

My participants also spoke of a preference to exclude adults when peer conflicts arose. In re-reading their experiences, I considered such instances as their attempts to maintain control, but I also considered how students enacted a sense of agency. I began to see that because of my participant's powerlessness regarding issues of academic support and lack of control, they became critical and active participants to make change in the world. My participants expressed that they did not approve of the way adults handled conflicts between students. They all agreed that, "adults make it worse." Miguel's story offered insight into the student perspective. He did not like that, "adults come in and want you [students] to shake hands and become friends" and he did not think it was a fair way to handle conflicts between students. In fact, Miguel felt students in conflict should be allowed to spend time away from each other before having to "shake hands" or "hug" as adults often requested. He continued, "how are we supposed to hug somebody like that… somebody we still have bad feelings towards?" Our conversation offered an example of how students feel forced by adults to engage with certain peers, when students clearly might prefer some time to deal with their feelings and allow time to pass before coming into contact again. Similar to the stories revealing participants' feelings that teachers do not always respond appropriately to their academic needs, their stories about involving adults in peer conflicts were the same. For example, both Claudia and Miguel referred to their bus driver handling a conflict between students stating that, "he won't do anything. He just tells us to go sit down" and "he doesn't do anything about it."

On the other hand, their stories about peer intervention revealed a greater sense of individual learning and personal reflection in my participants. In recalling another bus incident, Claudia stated, "I feel really bad for this kid on my bus… people on the bus keep bullying him. His parents don't care so I finally told him whenever he gets bullied to tell me." When I asked my participants how they handled conflict their responses seemed to have more of a preventative, rather immediate response approach. For example, participants said, "don't react" or "just tell them it's not affecting you." Other responses included, "ignore them" and "tell them they need to calm down and walk away." At one point my participants began to reflect on themselves, realizing that they too had probably caused conflict or bullied another student. The shift in focus revealed how they enacted agency. Reflecting on their bullying experiences thus allowed opportunities to change interpersonal relationships and supported their capacity to act upon situations of social importance. Claudia and Denise both admitted to bullying. Denise shared a more detailed story:

> I was outside at the park and I was with my friends. We were on the swings and then these two kids wanted to swing. We were like, "hey you black dude, get out of the swing!" After that I felt bad. Then he was looking around wondering if we were talking to him and I was like, "yeah, I'm talking to you on the swing. Aren't you black?" I felt bad after that and he ran away. I tried to yell "I'm sorry" to him but my friends just told me to leave him.

Denise was clearly capable of recognizing her mistake and genuinely felt bad about her actions. As I continued to listen to my participants' comments and reflections, it became clear that there were lessons learned and individual reflection occurring for my participants. When compared to adult intervention, there did not seem to be any personal outcome for my participants and led me to consider the importance of fostering student agency through education. When students were allowed to handle certain conflicts on their own and how they choose to, certain recognition and learning outcomes take place. My participants became more empathetic towards their peers who were picked on and they were able to reflect on their own behaviors. Therefore, the lessons learned were much greater than when adults participated in the conflict and resolution. Finally, my participants enacted a sense of agency that allowed them to move beyond racial inequalities. The subtle instances of agency supported their capabilities to become critical and active agents in their interpersonal relationships at school.

Clearly, my participants felt that they better understood how to deal with such instances versus their adult counterparts. Interestingly, participants made statements such as, “teachers are like friends” and “teachers are one of the most greatest helps,” yet most of the participants did not want to involve teachers in peer conflicts.

Theme III: Place Value as Problematizing Identity

Portes and Salas (2010) suggest that how we think of others and ourselves is situated in human activity and participation. The participants in my study expressed their identities based on either their parents or their peers. Rosa and Miguel constructed their expressed identities through stories of their parents. Denise, Claudia, and Jasmyn constructed their identities by comparing themselves to peers, while Carlos and Alecia expressed their identities by observing their peers’ actions. Joane Nagel (1994) considers identity formation as a dialectical process; likewise, Paula Wolfe (2011) recognizes how identity is often construed as “fixed,” arguing the importance of critical race theory in recognizing “how student identities are impacted by their experiences at school” and constantly reforming in response to “history, contexts, cultures, language, and relationships” (p. 79). As a result, many scholars recognize identity formation as related to place and context (Nagel, 1994; Wolfe, 2011; Zhou & Lee, 2007). In my study, the participants' identity formations were continually negotiated through their interactions at school and with their peers.

Introducing the participants in my study, I briefly stated their chosen ethnic identities. In the initial phase of data collection, I ensured each participant approved the use of the term, Latino/a, to represent him or her throughout the study. All of my participants approved this term; however, many of them shared the ethnic identity or identities they usually refer to and which I considered in my critical analysis. I returned to my participants' ethnic identities here because "to state that ethnic identity is a matter of choice is to ignore the structural context in which ethnic identities emerge" (Zhou & Lee, 2007, p. 198). My critical re-reading of the participants' emerging identities therefore aimed to examine the structural context as well as their continual negotiations of identity within the context of school. To recall, Rosa clearly identified herself as Mexican. In fact, race played a positive role for Rosa. The legal struggles of her parents, which could be read as racial profiling, inspired Rosa's desire to become an adult who makes changes and aids people who experience the same struggles. Likewise, Wilson. Ek, & Douglas (2014) posit that many Latino/a youth resist pressures to conform their identities and instead strive to maintain their heritage, cultural, and linguistic identities. Miguel and Carlos also identified themselves as Mexicans. I viewed my participants as striving to maintain their heritage and cultural identities at times, and they often utilizing their identities "as a border crossing resource" (Wilson et al., 2014, p. 6). Jasmyn considered herself Mexican-American, while Alecia articulated that she was Latina because she was U.S. born, but her parents emigrated from Mexico. Denise and Claudia did not ethnically identify themselves; Claudia's response was, "I don't know," and Denise identified her mother as Mexican and her father as Hispanic, while failing to directly or ethnically identify herself. A closer examination of my participants' identity negotiations allowed me to consider the dynamics of racial formations in the context of school. Finally, only one participant chose a hyphenated American ethnic identity given that each was

U.S. born which furthermore demonstrated the complexities of ethnic identity formations for Latinos/as.

Zhou and Lee (2007) argue that Latinos/as, as compared to their White counterparts, face complex choices of identity driven by nativity, class, and context. I viewed school as a place where my participants constantly negotiated their identities including their choice or lack thereof, to ethnically identify themselves. A brief example lies within Miguel's story of innocent labeling by a younger peer. With a good sense of humor, Miguel recalled:

> There was this one time… I found it funny and I didn't think it was offensive or anything… but, a girl came up to me and she said, "do you speak Mexican?" I laughed and shook my head, but she was little… I said, "no, I speak Spanish."

Miguel found himself in a position where he needed to correct the proper use of terms that were used in the child's assumption of his language abilities. I continued to experience my participants' negotiations of ethnic identity as data collection progressed. In my focus group interview, participants laughed when I inquired of any peanut allergies. They deemed the phenomenon "an American thing" for which they clearly did not culturally identify with.

Upon a deeper look at our conversations about soccer, I realized there were encounters of ethnic identity negotiations embedded in their stories. For example, Claudia, Miguel, and Carlos shared encounters of interesting social dynamics with their White peers during soccer games at recess. During recess, students would choose teams for a game of soccer, for which Miguel added, "at first nobody would ever pick us [Mexicans]." Miguel's use of the word "us" demonstrated his affiliation with a Mexican ethnic identity. His comment also showed that the exclusion of students, based on their ethnicity, occurred during such social encounters at recess. When pairing Claudia's statement of a peer stating, "I thought Mexican's were supposed to be good at soccer" and Carlos's statement of peers stating, "you suck at soccer" and "my grandma kicks better that you," the exclusion continued. My participant's identity was imposed on them because they were denied the opportunity to play soccer and because of the assumption that

“Mexicans” are “good soccer players.” Therefore, my participants were put into a position of re-negotiating their identity based on what was (un)available to them at the time. To borrow from Zhou and Lee (2007), “the ability to choose an American identity and to have that identity accepted by others is denied to them” (p. 203). In my participant’s case, they were excluded from playing soccer because their peers’ associated them as non-American, yet at the same time their peers projected the stereotypical expectation of a talented Mexican soccer player. In their stories about soccer during school lunch breaks and the comment, “I thought Mexicans were supposed to be good at soccer,” my participants’ skills were challenged, and they were placed in positions where they once again had to prove themselves to their White counterparts.

Furthermore, they were also racially stereotyped by this same comment, all of which resulted in a “Mexicans against Whites” duality. In this school experience, soccer was also a figurative border used to both exclude and include the Latino/a players. Wilson et al. (2014) considers such situations as the “racialization” of ethnic others. My participants were therefore faced with perplexing adversity of identity negotiations.

Theme IV: (Dis)placed Read as Positionality

The application of LatCrit theory infused with my own personal experiences as a public school teacher and ESL teacher served to interrupt and complicate my previous interpretive tale. Davila and Bradley (2010) identify schools as social institutions that mirror the larger society (p. 39) while Noguera (2008) labels the set up of schools as a controlling agent. Likewise, Valenzuela (1999) contextualizes her study within a historical framework, distinguishing schools as, “instruments of the maintenance of colonial relationships” and considers how the colonizing group possesses superiority of its social systems” (p. xvii). For example, several participants mentioned constraints of time. Alecia said, “we don’t get enough time to eat at lunch or have little free time… there’s no time to just hang out and visit.” Claudia expressed a similar interest, while Carlos added that, “I think the purpose of school should also be getting to interact with new people… like, people around the school you don't see normally or get to talk to a lot." I considered my participants' comments on time constraints within the context of language learning. One of the best avenues for second language learners to learn a language is through informal dialogue. Although my participants were all fluent English speakers, they were labeled as ESL students by the school and they would continue to benefit from informal dialogue in English. Based on their comments, however, their time for such beneficial dialogue was controlled "because the food lines get long and students have to rush to eat" and was therefore limited. The constraints of time felt by some participants within the context of language learning were evident in Jasmyn's comments as well. She stated, "I don't really have time to write much" and "I like to read a lot… I wish I had more time." When read as the unequal positioning of my participants, the system for which school functioned under controlled and limited the language learning activities that were specific for language fluency: reading, writing, and dialogue. Not only did the school label students as ESL upon entering school as an instrument of maintenance, the structure of schooling also controlled and maintained the opportunities my participants had for acquiring the desired skills for achieving English fluency.

The state mandated Home Language Survey that parents are required to fill out for every child enrolled in a public school exemplifies school as a control agent. Many Latino/a families, like those of my participants, identify their household as speaking English as their second language on this survey. The school then labels the students from such households as English language learners (ESL) until the students can prove adequate fluency in English. English fluency is only proven through a series of tests and placement, potentially carrying on every school year. The students whose families identify with their linguistic cultures are not entering school on equal grounds as their monolingual peers. On one hand, they are labeled upon school entrance (Delpit, 2006), and positionality is already at subtle work. On the other hand, these families position themselves, as they clearly want to identify with their first language. Positionality as a term, therefore includes both how a person positions herself as well as how the structural and political context positions a person. Valenzuela's (1999) work discusses this by critiquing the fundamental rationale behind ESL programs as subtractive (p. 26). In general terms, positionality refers to one's hierarchical position in society. Through state mandated protocols such as the Home Language Survey, multilingual Latino/a students, such as the participants in my study, often enter school without the same academic opportunities as their peers. Here, I discussed how unequal positioning resulted in challenges to navigate through home and school.

In re-reading my students' navigation through the two worlds of home culture and school culture, I considered their experiences with language and the language barriers that exist between their parents and their homework. In my interpretive tale, students could not regularly rely on their parents for homework support, specifically because of language. For example, Miguel stated, "I take advantage of the teachers that sometime let us start our homework in class so I know what I'm doing at home" and Rosa would wait for an assistant teacher to help. Acquiring the help from a teacher or assistant teacher was not always guaranteed, and therefore not always an option for my participants. I furthermore argue that because of their school entry label as "ESL" students, which subtracted valuable classroom instructional time due to the many tests required throughout the school year, and due to the language barriers they sometimes experienced with homework, my participants were placed in a unique and unequal position. I re-read my participants comments on time constraints and homework, and recognized the mandated language labeling practices as positioning my participants in places where they endured subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). As Portes and Salas (2010) argue, the categorization of Spanish speaking children "is an extension of historical subtractive practices" (p. 241) in which they point out that the identification and placement system for ESL students may appear helpful at first glance. They argue against similar ESL programming due to "group-based inequalities in learning outcomes and in the workforce" (Portes & Salas, 2010; Portes, 2005). Although ESL testing serves as a form of programmatic placement for Spanish-speaking public school students, it is important to recognize the role that well-intentioned programs have in positioning Latino/a school children.

In one way or another, my participants had to prove themselves worthy of their White counterparts, whether through English language skills or other skills, such as soccer. The educational landscape of my participants showed a place where cultural skills were constantly questioned, such as Carlos' translating skills remaining unnoticed at school and his teacher's doubt of his academic content language in Spanish. The educational landscape also revealed the unequal recognition of my participants and a place where they faced daily challenges in order to find their "place" of acceptance in the world. Such challenges resulted in various forms of resistance. For example, Rosa, Alecia, and Miguel each displayed a different mode of resistance, which afforded them a way to position themselves and respond to unequal systems within the structure of their schooling experiences.

My hope in utilizing a critical lens was to demonstrate ways that public school contributed to the positionality of the multilingual Latino/a participants, their paths to success, and/or, their achievements in society. Because of their language abilities, my participants experienced unequal positioning as soon as they entered the public school system. At the same time, they also experienced challenges of position from peers; however, they continually strived for positive recognition and good standing academic performance amidst the social obstacles or obstacles of testing and placement systems.

Summary

This section of chapter six served to critically explore the four themes. The first theme, Understanding School as *Place,* was re-read and titled as, Assimilation Processes and Resistance. I explored the assimilation processes of my participants while I also examined how school was sometimes a contested site in which participants resisted and enact agency. The second theme, Interpersonal Relationships in Place as Ongoing Negotiations, was re-read to examine the lack of control as well as the intentions and constraints that my participants experienced with their interpersonal relationships in the context of school. Their experiences revealed various forms of resistance as well as the ways my participant's critical and active understanding evoked change. The third theme, Place Value as Problematizing Identity, took a closer look at how the participant's identity formation was continually negotiated within the context of school and through their interactions with peers. The third theme also further identified the role race plays in their school-based experiences. The final, fourth theme, (Dis)placed Read as Positionality, explored both the ways in which positionality was imposed on my participants and also how my participants positioned themselves within the context of school. The last chapter presents the conclusion of my study. I present a review of the research questions and provide a summary of my study. I further attempt to answer the research questions and discuss the implications of my study.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of multilingual Latino/a students attending a suburban public school in the Midwest. The experiences of Rosa, Alecia, Miguel, Denise, Claudia, Jasmyn, and Carlos offered intricate insight into the navigational encounters they faced at school. Researchers posit that, "children's perspectives can offer important insight for understanding issues of importance to them, but that they may also demonstrate limitations in their awareness about how history and politics converge to shape their own experiences" (Hart, 2008; James & Prout, 1997). My hope for this study was two-fold: 1) to share and interpret what my participants already knew about their world and their own ways of learning and 2) to critically examine beneath the surface of their experiences what was not readily revealed or apparent in the underlying structure of schooling. Their stories revealed a glimpse into the adolescent affairs and the realistic circumstances that make up their world.

In this final chapter, I begin with the research questions I utilized to guide my study and briefly review my chosen method of data presentation. My study was set up as a qualitative case study in which I used hermeneutic inquiry and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) as my theoretical frameworks. . In order to demonstrate my utilization of the two frameworks, I presented data as two tales. First, I presented an interpretive tale of individual cases; second, I presented a critical tale of the individual cases. I followed the same method of data presentation for my cross-case analysis which I organized and presented around an interpretive reading of the emerging themes and concluded with a critical re-reading of the emerging themes. For the interpretation of findings, I further synthesized the data in an attempt to reconstruct and present a holistic understanding of my study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Finally, I included a researcher reflection and discussed the implications and limitations of my study, concluding with a discussion of recommendations for future research.

The hermeneutic tradition provides an opportunity to consider how participants arrived at meaning and how they are implicated in that meaning. Hermeneutic inquiry is not about reporting how things are or how things were; rather, it returns to the "difficult interpretive play for which we live our lives together" (Agrey, 2014, p. 397). Drawing on the scholarly insights of David G. Smith and Ted Aoki, I utilized a hermeneutical approach to interpret, reflect upon, and understand the lived experiences of the participants in my first tale. I utilized LatCrit in re-reading my data from a critical lens. I referred to the scholarly insights of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Tara J. Yosso, Daniel G. Solorzano, Angela Valenzuela, and Gloria Anzaldua to better understand the racial dynamics that affect Latinos/as.

Interpretation of Findings

Previously, in chapters four, five, and six an interpretation of data was organized and presented in a readable narrative. Two-tales were presented for each, individual participant, then a cross-case analysis in the form of organized themes was presented.

My primary research question was: How do multilingual Latino/a students age eleven to fourteen experience school-based learning in a suburban public school located in the Midwest? In this section I briefly reflect on the participants' experiences and synthesize general answers to each research question.

Overall, the seven participants perceived their school-based learning experiences in a large, suburban school district both positively and negatively. Some of their perceptions of school-based learning were typical of eleven and twelve year olds and some I considered as directly related to their Latino/a status. Rosa, Alecia, Jasmyn, Claudia, and Denise all thought school was “sometimes fun” and “sometimes boring.” Miguel and Carlos liked their classes when they were doing experiments or activities. They each showed up with a positive attitude, ready to learn. They each navigated through school life differently but quite well. I believe the particular school district where my study took place was prepared and effective in their overall efforts to provide support for various learning needs of the diverse student body, therefore playing a role in the outcome of my participants’ positive perceptions.

Rosa and Jasmyn seemed to struggle more than all of the participants in their overall experiences at school. Rosa was open about her struggles as she displayed resistance and enacted agency. On the other hand, Jasmyn covertly struggled although it didn’t seem to bother her much. They both managed to find ways to successfully navigate through school. Alecia and Denise were studious. Alecia was willingly met with extra duties and responsibilities in teacher-led school clubs or in other adult-like duties, aiding her teachers throughout her school days. While I considered Alecia more whimsical in her overall experiences at school, Denise was more stoic about her learning experiences. She took school rules and assignments very seriously, always doing exactly what was asked of her. Claudia, Miguel, and Carlos were the most social out of all participants, navigating through school life easily. They maintained many friends, good relationships with teachers, and they expressed a liking for teachers whose classes were “laid back.” During my interviews, they preferred to talk more about soccer or the lunch break and school bus social dynamics. School represented a social world for them, whether in the classroom or on the bus.

For these seven participants, school was a place they perceived as preparing them for success later in life, defined as getting a job or going to college. They never fully explained how school could prepare them for the future, and I did not necessarily expect them to; therefore, I believe they simply regurgitated a definition of schooling that may or may not hold true over time. I am left to ponder the question, whose schooling prepares them for success later in life? At times school was boring, at times it was fun, and at times school could be frustrating. School was a place of perseverance with the hope that such perseverance would be rewarded one day. Moreover, school was a contested space in which an interplay between the contextual constraints of schooling and human agency occurred.

The interpersonal relationships at school were important. The participants valued their relationships with teachers and peers, thus revealing the various layers of positionality that took place. For example, the structure of schooling inevitably positions students; however, the participants in this study made subtle attempts to author the figured world they inhabited, thus positioning themselves as well. Most notable were their experiences of identity expression and encounters of the cultural heritage of their families with the culture of the school. All of the participants sifted through various identity markers, either ascribed by others or perceived by them. Rosa, Alecia, and Miguel all identified with their Mexican ethnicity, while other participants measured their academic or social abilities by comparing themselves to their peers. Their school-based learning experiences were met with a continual negotiation of identity expression. Their identities were constantly shaped and re-shaped depending on the context or situation at any given moment in school. Shifts in their identity seemed to occur at various times during school. Finally, my participants had to navigate through two different worlds at times due to a disconnect between school culture and family culture. Language was most often a site of navigation for participants and their families. They expressed stories of language barriers that either hindered their parents from helping them with homework or prevented younger siblings from communicating with their parents. Homework was not always an easy task for my participants as a result of this language barrier.

Three sub-questions were used to guide my research in addition to my main research question. The first sub-question was: How do multilingual Latino/a students' stories reveal what learning resources they bring to school?

My participants’ stories revealed many resources that were often unrecognized or undervalued within the structure of schooling. The stories revealed their willingness to work hard in school as well as a desire to impress their teachers. The participants and their families were faced with many challenges that seemed to assist them with school relationships, critical thinking skills, and responsibility. Due to some of the challenges that are unique to multilingual Latino/a learners, my participants held a wealth of learning resources that included supportive home communities and linguistic skills. For instance, the participants naturally expressed information about their home lives and families through stories of school-based learning experiences. Most of the information related to homework, after school activities, responsibilities, and general interactions with their parents and siblings. Almost all of the participants shared stories of supportive homework networks that included siblings, cousins, or friends if their parents could not help them. The brief mention of family and community sprinkled throughout their stories gave me a firm impression that they came from a home culture that placed high value on community accommodation and support. Considering the accommodating and supportive community culture expressed by participants, my understanding of their perceptions of bullying situations was further aided. In fact, a supportive tone stood out in most of the stories about bullying by way of helping out a peer. Their supportive culture outside of school was also expressed in perceptions of fairness and in the importance of harboring a sense of belonging at school, not only for themselves but for peers as well. Thus, I considered how home culture and community support was a learning resource the participants brought with them to school.

The linguistic abilities of my participants were not valued in the context of school. Aside from all participants being bilingual in the Spanish and English languages (a skill many schools encourage), translating skills require a considerable amount of intellect, yet I argued that these skills remained unrecognized. Not only does such a task require adult like responsibility, but the sophisticated lingo that came with the particular contexts for which translation work occurred could arguably be difficult for a speaker of any language. Building on this, my participants harbored maturity similar, if not equivalent, to that of adult interactions. Some examples could include interpreting body language and the active listening and response required of conversational etiquette. I argue that such skills are beyond most eleven to fourteen year old adolescents and often aided my participants in creating healthy and communicative relationships with teachers and peers.

Another sub-question was: What learning needs of multilingual Latino/a students should schools pay attention to?

Academically, the participants in this study would benefit from a more student centered approach to teaching and learning, given more time to think and process newly acquired skills and individualized attention from their teachers. In my conversations with the participants regarding curriculum and learning styles, their responses hinted towards a student-driven focus that could help them remain engaged and surpass the boredom they often experienced. Whether it was an interest in a specific type of animal, dividing fractions, or learning a new strategy for shading in art, my participants needed more autonomy in their learning. The participants also talked about time, rather having more time for specific purposes. Academically, they needed more time to process and apply newly acquired skills. I got the impression that their school schedules were structured to the extent that they were rarely given down time to either catch up on an assignment, get a head start on homework, or simply practice what was just taught to them.

Finally, they needed more individualized attention from their teachers. They needed teachers to take time to focus on each of them as unique and differing individuals. Most notable were their expressions of needing more of a reciprocal relationship with their teachers. Carlos and Jasmyn did not always want to approach their teachers for academic help because they felt too shy or embarrassed to speak in front of their peers. They sometimes needed teachers to be the ones who initiated one on one conversation or to approach them and offer individual academic support. Given that adolescents are social beings, my participants needed more informal segments of time throughout their school day to mainly socialize with peers or informally with their teachers. I think it was telling that the two most academically serious participants, Alecia and Denise, expressed this need. Building on the previously mentioned need to have more informal learning time, they would benefit from less structured segments of time in the school day which could allow for relationship building between teachers and peers.

Understanding cultural community values allows yet another way to examine their specific needs at school as well as the various modes of resistance, agency, and identity expressions revealed in my participants' stories. For example, the distrust Claudia's parents harbored in making their decision about the field trip could be understood as a cultural clash between school culture and the culture of their community. Another layer to this viewpoint is within the participants' comments on student-teacher relationships, teacher responses to students' learning needs, as well as their comments about the overall structure of schooling. Given the impression that the culture of my participants' home communities were extremely supportive and accommodating to one another when needed, another look at their stories of school-based learning seemed to point towards a self-reliant school culture rather than a supportive, accommodating one. In essence, Rosa's resistance could be understood as an attempt to preserve her identity with a home community of strong support and accommodation, or as a way to affirm her own agency in a school community that emphasized self-reliance. In this respect, I understand that to a certain degree, the participants did not feel the same supportive, accommodating community that they felt outside of school.

The ways in which my participants talked about school structure and their overall engagement at school left me with a broader consideration of the disconnect between their school culture and their home cultures. Whereas school culture emphasized self-reliance, their home cultures seemed to emphasize support and accommodation. In attempting to achieve analytical clarity and further broaden my understanding of the findings, the ways in which participants resisted, expressed identity, assimilated, and enacted agency can all point back to a cultural disconnect between home and school.

My last sub-question was: In what ways, if any, does race play a role in the schooling experiences of multilingual Latino/a students?

For my study it was imperative to examine race in order to gain greater clarity in how it shaped the experiences of my participants. A clear example of the role of race in my participants' school-based learning experiences lies within their negotiations of identity. At times, race served to empower participants to enact agency and transform their figured worlds. Other times, race played a role by constraining participants. Wilson, Ek, and Douglas (2014) use the term educational borderlands to describe how people are identified, how borders are drawn to include or exclude, and how borders are navigated. They further define educational borderlands as "the physical and/or conceptual landscapes where one must negotiate notions of cultural difference as she or he lives and learns- landscapes that envelop a wide array of pedagogical and cultural spaces for youth" (Wilson et al., 2014, p. 3). The identity negotiations my participants experienced, better served their abilities to critique, resist, and transform situations specific to Latino/a issues in the U.S. In recalling my study, Rosa was able to use her parent's legal issues as a transformative platform and enact change while Alecia's more positive display of Latino/a resistance attempted to confront negative portrayals and ideas of Latinos/as as a group. In this way, race served as a positive role affirming their Latina identity.

Race also served to constrain and exclude my participants. The curriculum lacked Latino/a influence. As in Denise's experience, she would have benefited from learning about Latino/a contributions to U.S. society. The benefits of learning about one's own heritage in the context of school easily outweigh the absence of such knowledge. Latino/a students need opportunities to envision themselves as contributing members to society. Race also played a role by excluding my participants from certain activities. Carlos, Miguel, and Claudia were targets of racism from their peers during the organization of teams for a brief soccer match during lunch break. Finally, language was a subtle form of racism in the educational experiences of my participants. The school could have done a better job at embracing their bilingualism.

Researcher Reflection

I am left to consider the important and necessary step of self-reflection as my research journey with seven multilingual, Latino/a participants attending a suburban public school district in the Midwest concludes. Personal reflection is an important part of qualitative research. Although I utilized a research journal throughout the entire process, new insights were discovered as I reflected on my study while nearing its completion. For example, I considered the specific physical descriptions and characteristics I ascribed to my participants. I recognized that the specific words and language I used could very likely stem from my position as a White, middle-class adult. It was import to recognize and consider the way my own biases were revealed in my attempt to characterize the participants to my readers. I gleaned over my study in its entirety and realized there were different interactions during individual interviews versus interactions during the focus group interview. I felt that the differences between interviews could offer insight for other researchers. First, I approached the focus group interview expecting the same well-behaved, focused behavior from my participants that I received in most individual interviews with the same participants. Looking back, I realized that I made an assumption about the research process that needed further thought.

In most of the individual interviews, participants were respectful, attentive, and they made genuine attempts to address the issues and topics I utilized to guide each interview. The interview process was fairly smooth, and each participant stayed on topic and answered my interview questions most of the time; however, the focus group interview had a different tone. Therefore, I considered the dynamics of the focus group that seemed to affect and shape my interactions with participants. For example, how were my own behaviors affected and shaped? How did the dynamics of the focus group shape the questions I asked, the interjections I made, and/or affect my listening skills?

There was a particular confidence and authority amongst the four Latino/a participants during the focus group interview that did not seem prevalent in the individual interviews. One explanation could be my status as a White, female teacher. I struggled more to focus the participants and start the focus group interview, as they seemed to prefer socializing and mingling in the beginning. The focus group interview was conducted over their lunch period- typically one of the only social parts of their day. I felt like an outsider or observer who sat on the sidelines. I wondered if being the only identified White ethnic individual in the group cast me as an outsider. The moment I imposed a mostly White, American assumption on the group when I referred to peanut allergies did not seem to help my inclusion in the group either. I also recall feeling slightly uncomfortable, if not embarrassed when the four participants laughed and eventually humored me about peanut allergies. There was an obvious distinction, both culturally and ethnically, between the four of them and myself. A distinction I needed to understand in order to be granted access into their world and that needed further reflection in order to better understand their experiences.

In order to gain access into their adolescent meanderings, I adjusted my intentions and informally interjected and asked them questions about topics I overheard- soccer, friends, video games, and materialistic items they wanted or received during the recent holiday season to name a few. I related to them by mentioning my own children, who had similar interests to those discussed by the participants. Through my own childrens' interests, I too could talk about a particular video game or sport for example. In return, they acknowledged my contributions to the conversation and began to include me by asking questions. Discussing my own children (one of which was similar in age) seemed to help us relate to one another. This granted access, while eliminating my feeling of being an outsider.

The focus group seemed to give participants more command over the interview. My role as a teacher also could have factored into the dynamics. I realized my intended, teacher topics I had planned for the interview were of little interest to the four participants. Their social, playful demeanor forced me to adjust my own demeanor and interactions with the group. For example, I laughed and playfully joked around with the participants more than I did in the individual interviews. I slightly adjusted my own behaviors to seem not so teacher-like or adult-like. I believe these dynamics lent the focus group interview to be centered on social issues, such as bullying. Most importantly, the participants' responses seemed more animated and excitable. Because the interview questions were adjusted to relate to social issues they preferred to discuss, I felt each participant was placed in the position of 'knower.' In a sense, they were the experts sharing their expertise with me. Given the cultural, ethnic, and teacher-student distinctions between the group and myself, the participants only spoke in English. I would have expected them to at least speak a little Spanish during small, side conversations to one another, as students commonly participate in throughout the school day. Although the four participants seemed to have more command and confidence in the focus group interview, I believe their use of English only, even to one another, was a sign of respect and awareness of my position as an English speaking teacher.

Implications

The implications of this study suggest considerations for research, practice, and policy, and community-school connections. Overall, this study suggests considerations to the way educators view students of differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds, particularly Latinos/as as they continue to experience "ambiguous positioning as persons or groups who are neither 'White' nor 'Black' in an American society that has traditionally constructed race in a dichotomous and rigid fashion" (Garcia, 2013, p. 235). My study offers suggestive evidence supporting the importance of cultural responsiveness from educators and from educational institutions. My study also includes counter-stories, a tenet of LatCrit, to better understand the views of Latino/a students. In a time of harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric and English-only principles, my study appears to support the need for a more inclusive understanding of what it means to be a multilingual Latino/a student in a U.S. public school today.

Implications for Research

More research is needed that includes voices of children to better understand how they react to the structure of schooling, how they experience learning, and what specific cultural and linguistic needs they have. I do not view our work as educators and scholars as finite, for new generations of students will continue to experience hybrid moments or continue to explore new ways to navigate through school, all of which calls into question our own ways of viewing the world. Previous research has shown a focus on Latino/a school experience with limited attention to student narratives. Many studies include the views of teachers often resulting in an unintentional silencing of students' own voices. This study moves research towards an explicit focus on the emergence of the student voice, allowing new means to understand school-based learning, to understand the cultural needs and resources unique to Latino/a students, and to understand how race plays a role.

Furthermore, this study utilized a combination of two theoretical frameworks adding to the complexities and multiplicities of data analysis and presentation. A useful consideration for future research is to conduct a similar study with a combination of frameworks and with a larger group of participants. Many studies conducted on Latino/a learners utilize one major theoretical framework, often ethnography or extensions of Critical Race Theory. It would be useful to study a greater population utilizing the complexities of frameworks available. Another useful component for researchers to consider is including the voice of parents and other community stakeholders. My study focused solely on the voices of children. Perhaps completing another study with the inclusion of parents and other community members would add to the growing body of literature on LatCrit in education. I urge future research to continue the application of LatCrit in education in order to provide further insight into the schooling experiences of Latino/a students. Repeating this study with a different age group and in various schools, such as other suburban areas and urban school districts, would be beneficial for further research.

Implications for Practice

As I listened to the transcripts of Rosa, Denise, Claudia, Alecia, Jasmyn, Miguel, and Carlos, I found myself wanting to share their experiences and my reflection on those experiences with peer educators. I experienced a deep desire to engage in conversations with other educators or to return instantly to my own classroom so I could change some ways I practiced my own teaching or ways I interacted and approached students. I felt an urgency to put into practice what I had learned through the valuable conversations with my participants; therefore, this study supports the research on learner-focused studies in teacher education (Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006; Sykes & Bird, 1992). For example, Christine E. Sleeter (2001) does a good job examining various teacher education strategies in preparing pre-service teachers for multicultural schools; however, suggestions are limited for including public school student narratives in teacher education. Typically, pre-service teachers engage in their own reflective narratives in order to examine bias or deficit views. I suggest the addition of public school student narratives while immersing pre-service teachers into conversations with public school students, better preparing teachers for multicultural classrooms.

As teachers it is important to consider the relationships we have with our students. The student-teacher relationship was found to be important to participants in my study and therefore supports other research findings on the matter (Balagna, Young, & Smith, 2013; Sosa, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). Such views call our understanding of the relationships we have with our students beyond the classroom door into question. For example, culturally relevant pedagogy encourages teachers to challenge the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling and society (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and Li (2008) argues for a multifaceted understanding of relationships that include the complex positioning of social institutions such as schools. Therefore, teachers should consider the complexity of student-teacher interactions- how they can learn from their students. Teachers should also consider how they are positioned in such institutions as schools or society that limit and constrain their interactions and relationships with their students. Finally, teachers should consider how they are limiting their own expertise as teachers if they are not mindful of their students' perspectives.

This study is a compelling case to support professional development focused on how teachers can foster student agency, provide individual student support, and use student-directed teaching strategies. I argue that existing professional development too often focuses on improving the achievement or test scores of Latino/a students and students labeled as English Language Learners, further serving a deficit approach. I feel strongly that aiding teachers' abilities to find ways for Latino/a learners to assert personal significance and intentions will lead to more meaningful and transformative experiences for both teachers and students alike. Professional development that helps teachers' abilities to foster student agency would need to include components aimed at how students' perceptions challenge dominant ways of thinking and to help teachers recognize how their own expertise limits their capacity to maximize student potential (Turner, 2003). It is important for teachers to recognize the need for balance between imposing their own ideas onto students and responding appropriately to students' needs. As indicated by the participants in my study, teachers, as well as other authority figures associated with schools, were not always perceived as responding to students' needs, and participants felt imposed-on by an adult "idea" of how to handle certain situations (e.g. bullying). Professional development focused on aiding teachers' abilities to foster student agency could also serve to aid teachers in their ability to recognize the balance between imposing on students and responding appropriately to their needs.

Other professional development topics could include ways for teachers to create classroom communities that are more conversational and interactive. In my study, participants clearly indicated a desire for more unstructured, informal socializing segments during the school day. Furthermore, one of the best ways to support language development is to spend time (informally) immersed in the newly acquired language. Finally, given the social nature of an adolescent age group, teachers should consider incorporating more conversational, social segments into the school day, and teachers should consider adopting a teaching and learning style that involves more conversational interactions among students and teachers. Teachers desiring to engage all students, from all backgrounds and languages, should consider incorporating more hands on activities while creating space for students to interact with each other in conversational ways. Teachers would also benefit by considering new methods of teaching that allowed them to spend more one on one time with students and provide more individualized support. Finally, it is important for teachers to consider the need students have for informally interacting with teachers. Professional development that offers ways for teachers to make themselves available to students beyond the formalized structure of schooling might provide further insight into the student-teacher relationship and extend teachers' abilities to build on the learning resources students bring to school.

Implications for Policy

The sad reality is that no significant improvements can be made while the focus remains on individual performance that is tied to standardized testing and funding that is tied to school performance. Each and every student is individually unique and brings wisdom from his/her diverse cultural background that standardized tests cannot begin to measure. In the district where this study took place and, albeit in the entire state, students who were labeled ESL were tested above and beyond the required standardized state testing that most other students endured. High demand test requirements only serve to interrupt and exclude Latinos/as and other language learners from daily instructional time at school. Educational policy needs to seriously consider the purpose that standardized testing serves and start placing students' needs first. Similarly, once ESL students are considered proficient, designated English language services often cease, leaving students with limited continual support beyond the mainstream classroom. Teachers, administrators, and Latino/a parents should work together to create policies that are sensitive to the cultural and linguistic needs of Latino/a students. More could be done to serve multilingual students on an ongoing, continual basis. Educational policy should consider structuring schools to incorporate language learning and support that is unmeasured and ongoing. Finally, policies regarding language learning and cultural responsiveness should include the direct insights from the community members for which such policies are created for.

Language learners should not only receive ongoing, continual linguistic support, but they should also receive ongoing support from teachers who work in schools and classrooms with ESL students. Educational policy should consider providing teachers with mandatory, ongoing ESL education with the possibility of compensation. In other words, teachers should be incentivized for ongoing efforts to maximize schooling for Latinos/as and other culturally diverse students. As it is now, educational policy fails to consider the lives of culturally and linguistically diverse children beyond school doors, and it fails to provide teachers with the ongoing support they need to fully embrace the wisdom and resources of linguistically diverse students and families. Policy regarding bilingual education should consider how to further strengthen the linguistic abilities many Latino/a students bring with them to school. Policy that aims to better maintain a first language while acquiring a new language fluently is of vital importance if our goal is to engage Latino/a and other linguistically divers students to their full potential.

Implications for Community-School Connections

I have always been a proponent of home visits and community schools. This section of implications focuses on bringing teachers into the communities of their students and bringing communities into schools. Transportation represents a problematic issue for many students and their families. For example, the families of participants in this study all relied on public school transportation and their options for any after-school activities or events were limited due to transportation. Many families only had access to one vehicle, and non-traditional work schedules or shift obligations did not always correlate with the timing of school events; a reality that the structure of schooling politely ignores. I do not purport further burdening teachers with this responsibility, but I do suggest making small adjustments to the standard school schedule in order to allow times for teachers to “go beyond the doors of their classrooms” and out into the homes and communities of their students. Rather than always expecting families (and teachers) to rearrange their evenings beyond the typical school day, build in time throughout the school year where families are encouraged to invite teachers into their communities. An example, one of which I have had the opportunity to participate in, includes an afternoon where teachers and school staff walk door to door, handing out flyers with pertinent information or reminders such as the first day of school. Another example could include a schedule where teachers would conduct at least one parent-teacher conference at the home of each student. Moreover, schools should encourage efforts that make the communication more personal and meaningful. I further argue that when teachers are encouraged, if not required, to physically spend time in their students' communities, some of the biases they may hold can be broken down over time.

Community schools are based on the idea that the school serves as a centrally located place where academics, health, social services, and youth and community development integrate. The school essentially becomes a central community resource. Although the idea that every school serving as a community school may not be realistic, I believe that most schools are capable of incorporating at least some of the communicable practices of a community school. For example, schools could expand learning opportunities for parents by inviting school staff, guest speakers, local organizations, as well as other parents to inform, engage, and educate them in various areas. Some of these areas could include adult ESL classes, adult tutoring services, school policy and mandate information (in which parent input is encouraged), and civic education to name a few. Although the district where my study took place has a district wide community center for which similar services are offered, I believe linking community development directly through the childrens' individual schools will better serve the community-school relationship. Moreover, the suggested community partnerships could occur simultaneously during the students' school day. Immigrant and marginalized parents are often intimidated by U.S. public schooling, and they often hold their own biases. I feel strongly that efforts encouraging teachers and school staff to enter communities of their students while inviting community members into the school serves to break down barriers that leaves schools and family communities feeling disconnected.

Limitations of the Study

Merriam (2002) informs us that issues of generalizability loom larger with a case study than with other types of qualitative research, but much can be learned from a particular case. One of the limitations of this study was location. This study took place in a suburban location in the Midwest, limiting generalizability to other settings. Furthermore, the small sample size and the specific focus on student's age of eleven to fourteen presents further limitations of the study. As a result, generalizations may not be made across other ages. This study focused on the Latino/a ethnic group, which prevents the findings from being generalized to other ethnicities. Generalizability, however, is not an expectation in qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Transferability by way of thick, rich description of the participants and the context of the study provides the basis in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). With the use of case study methods, the findings remained unique to the individuals and their settings, which may also be viewed as a limitation. Although limitations exist for this qualitative study, its strengths prove valuable.

My status as a teacher was a limitation to this study. Although my participants were not students of mine, their awareness of my role as a teacher could have affected their interactions with me as well as their responses to interview questions. My status as a White, adult female conducting research on Latino/a students further added to the positioning differences between us; however, I worked to establish good rapport and remained reflexive in my understanding of the participants' experiences while making all attempts to avoid essentializing their experiences. This study would benefit from the inclusion of more Latino/a participants, possibly from other school sites, to add variety and depth to the data; however, given that qualitative case study methods were utilized, the findings remain unique to the individuals and their setting which further adds to the richness to my study.

Future Research

Bringing this study to a close, there are a few possible avenues to consider for future research. First, with two male participants and five female participants, I found myself wondering what my study would look like if the focus was intentionally on gender. Gender issues were briefly revealed, although differently, through both Miguel and Jasmyn's experiences. Examining the school-based experiences of Latino/a students through a feminist lens could provide more details into the inequities specific to Latina female students, thus enriching our understanding of the Latina school experiences and providing more depth to our understanding of cross-cultural relationships.

Another avenue for further study could be research into the socio-economic, political, and cultural developments of Latinos/as in America as part of school curriculum. An examination of the ways in which Latinos/as help shape and define American culture, both historically and presently, is needed to change the overall narrative and allow a more encouraging future for Latino/a youth to take shape. I remain bothered by Denise's seemingly inability to visualize herself as a leader at school. The positive contributions of Latinos/as could further aid in teacher education, which has been criticized for adopting a narrow, culturally deficit approach of students from marginalized groups. A notable variation of counter-storytelling and a critical race stance, could be the incorporation of Critical Race Pedagogy. Blum and De la Piedra (2010) do a good job incorporating CRP into the experiential context of schools and note that there is a greater need for research to include many types of counter-storytelling. Finally, while I encourage future research to include students' voices, a mixed-method study that includes teachers, parents, and administrators in a multi-method research study might serve beneficial in furthering cultural responsiveness in curriculum and education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview 1

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. Tell me about your family.
3. What are some things you do to help you prepare for the school day?
4. Tell me about your friends.
5. What were you most looking forward to for this school year
6. Tell me about your teachers.
7. Tell me about your school. Tell me about your typical school day.
8. Think about the word "school" for a moment. What do you think the role of school is
9. Do you have any stories about school that you would like to share?
10. What skills do you think you have that help you learn in school?
11. Where do you feel most comfortable at school? Tell me about it.
12. Where do you feel uncomfortable at school? Tell me about it.
13. Tell me about a time at school when you felt proud of yourself.
14. Has there ever been a time at school when you felt that something unfair happened to you?

Appendix B: Writing Prompt

Instructions: Find a quiet and comfortable space to write a response to the writing prompt. Take a few minutes to think about the writing prompt before you begin to write. Try to write as much detail as you can.

Prompt: In as much detail as possible, tell me about the best **or** the worst day of school you have ever had.

Appendix C: Drawing Prompt

Instructions: In the boxes below, draw a sequence of pictures representing the best **or** the worst day of school you have ever had. Take your time and draw as much detail as you can. You may add words if you would like. You may use a pencil, crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Use as many boxes as you need.

Appendix D: Interview 2

1. Have you thought about a fake name that you would like me to use for my report? Do you have a writing/drawing prompt to turn into me?

2. Tell me about a book you are reading, or the last one you read. What kinds of books do you like to read?

3. What do you think your strengths are at school and/or for learning?

4. What skills do you think you have that help you learn in school?

5. How would you describe school to a kid who has never been to school before?

6. How would you describe teachers to a kid who has never been to school before?

7. Where do you feel most comfortable at school (where you can be yourself)?

8. Where do you feel uncomfortable at school?

9. If you could change anything you wanted about school for the rest of the year, what changes would you make?

10. If you were a teacher, how would you help students learn?

11. Tell me a story about a school experience you've had- anything related to being at school.

Appendix E: Focus Group Interview

1. How has school been since we've last talked to one another?

2. Tell me more about your electives (music & instrument, physical education, voice). I enjoyed observing you in those classes. Do you feel comfortable and enjoy those classes?

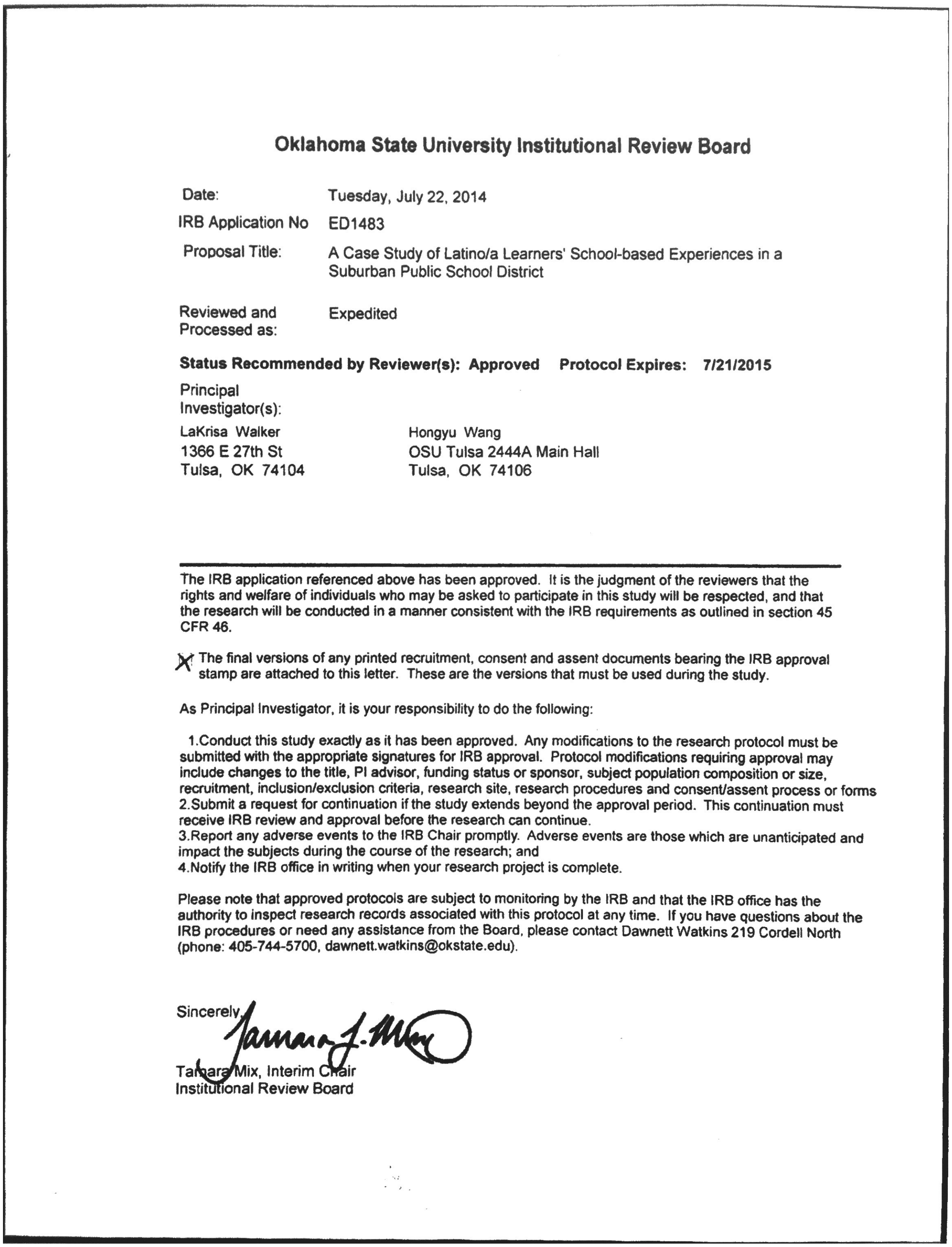
3. We have talked about friends and peers, how are your peers alike or different from you? How do you feel about these differences (or likes)?

4. I would like to discuss any experiences you have had on the bus. Do you have anything to share?

5. How do you react when you are in conflict with a friend, classmate, or teacher?

6. How do you feel about the issue of bullying at your school, or generally in schools? Do you have any stories you could share about this topic?

Appendix F: IRB Approval



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, July 22, 2014
IRB Application No ED1483
Proposal Title: A Case Study of Latino/a Learners' School-based Experiences in a Suburban Public School District

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 7/21/2015

Principal Investigator(s):

LaKrisa Walker 1366 E 27th St Tulsa, OK 74104	Hongyu Wang OSU Tulsa 2444A Main Hall Tulsa, OK 74106

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Tamara J. Mix

Tamara Mix, Interim Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

LaKrisa Nichelle Walker

Candidate for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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