NUESTRAS VOCES RESISTEN:

EXPERIENCES OF CHICANAS/LATINAS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

By

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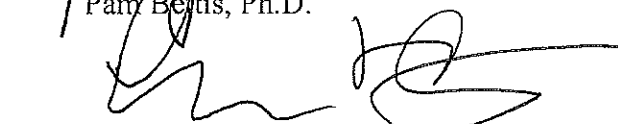
To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of

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NUESTRAS VOCES RESISTEN:

THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF CHICANAS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Abstract

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Contrary to research studies that operate within a traditional Eurocentric epistemological framework that sees the knowledge of students of color as inferior to the "norm," this study centers the life experiences of 10 Chicana/Latina college students from the Pacific Northwest. Utilizing LatCrit, Chicana epistemology and storytelling, this study unveils the hidden hegemonic narratives within the structures of society. LatCrit unveils the intersections of race/ethnicity, class, gender, and hidden systematic layers of oppression within the social and political structures. The metaphorical concept of *La Glorieta* illustrates the *modus operandi* of oppression that work cohesively to create a *dynamic apparatus* reproducing oppressive practices.

These participants are not just powerless victims of the hegemony rooted in social and political structures, but individuals who seek emancipation by creating oppositional stands. Utilizing Chicana feminist epistemology, this study documents that Chicana'/Latina' critical ways of knowing are not deficits knowledge, but crucial survival mechanisms for negotiating hybrid identities and navigating intersecting borderlands of *La Glorieta*. This study illuminates oppositional agency, concepts of borderland subjectivity, and *Mestiza* consciousness revealing that despite the feelings of powerlessness, inferiority, and unworthiness, these Chicana/Latina students continue pursuing their academic goals. They are revered for managing to remain in

higher education and excelling in their academic endeavors. Regardless of their success and achievements the participants appear to live in a constant state of negotiation, ambiguity, and contradicting loyalties. Fortunately, this difficult state is not immobilizing, rather, they are able to transcend internal borders and external social locations. Some tactics they use to motivate themselves include valuing education, the internalized commitment to prove "them" wrong, the commitment of bridging their communities with the academic world, and the sense of pride and appreciation for their heritage. This study recognizes the oppositional practices, the importance of education, claiming identities, the commitment of proving "them" wrong, maintaining one's language, and affirming one's culture as individual acts of resistance. Recognizing Chicana/Latina students' responses to different aspects of oppression, society gains important knowledge, helping transform society's perception of these groups from passive survivals to proactive agents of social change making valuable contributions to countering structural of oppression.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

at Eastern Washington University. For planting the seeds of intellectual curiosity,

academic excellence, and social equity.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There are limited studies that focus on the Chicana/Latina experience in the United States, and an even smaller number of studies that focus on Chicanas/Latinas in higher education with a critical lens examining the educational barriers experienced by this group (Gándara, 1982; Ginorio & Houston, 2000; Segura, 1993). The Pacific Northwest is a region with almost no existing literature on Chicanas'/Latinas' experiences, even though their presence and contributions to this region have been enormous. The Chicano/Latino population has been present in the Pacific Northwest for approximately two centuries (Alamillo, 2004); thus, "Latinos are no strangers to this region" (Gamboa, 2000, p. 17). In the state of Washington, the Latina/o population has increased approximately 147 percent from 1990 to 2008 and is estimated to increase to 1 million people by the year 2030. Currently, Chicanos/Latinos are the largest ethnic/racial minority group in the state of Washington and the fastest growing of any minority group.

Despite the relatively large Latino population in the state of Washington, they are the most underrepresented at college campuses across the state[1]. Their experiences continue to be invisible in classrooms, workplaces, and public life, and in the academic literature, especially relating to issues of social inequality (Allamillo, 2006; Gamboa, 2000; Garcia, 1998). Because of this invisibility of the Chicana'/Latina' experience in the Pacific Northwest, there is a gap in the Educational literature in the Chicana/o studies. This invisibility of the Chicana/Latina'

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[1] Latinos compose 11.3% of the population between 17 and 39, but only represent 5.2% of the state's undergraduate student body. "July 2006 Diversity Report." Higher Education Coordinating Board Research 2006. Higher Education Coordinating Board 5 Nov. 2006.

experiences have resulted in a dismissal of Chicana's/Latina's challenges within the education system. These challenges often result due to the erasure of languages (Anzaldúa, 1990), the deficit view of Latina/o students in education (Chapa & Valencia, 1993), and the inequitable relationships of power within the educational, political and social structure (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Trujillo, 1998). Moreover, there is a lack of intersectional analyses of Latinas' identities (Godinez, 2006; Trujillo, 1998).

Significance of the Study

In this study, I intend to close three gaps in the educational literature relating to Latinas' in higher education: 1) the lack of research focusing on Chicana/Latina students with an focus on social inequalities through an intersectionality lens, 2) the devaluation of Chicanas epistemologies and, 3) the nearly non existing literature regarding the life and academic experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest.

This chapter is divided into three parts that explain the importance of conducting this study. The first section provides a brief historical literature review of studies focusing on Chicana/Latina and Chicano/Latino students in the United States. This part provides a glimpse on how historical depictions of this group reproduce and maintain social inequalities through hegemonic discursive practices and dominant discourses. The historical depiction of Chicana/Latina and Chicano/Latino students include the portrayal of them as deficient students, and their negative representation in mainstream society.

In the second section, I critically analyze the devaluation of Chicanas epistemology not only in school, but within their communities and how it has impacted Chicanas'/Latinas' identities. I present the importance of revealing college Chicana/Latina students' experiences through the lens of the intersections of multiple oppressions including racism, classism, and

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sexism. I describe the complexity of the intersectionality of the multiple oppressions faced by

Chicanas/Latinas in the United States, and argue that a race-class-gender intersection is too

narrow when analyzing the life experiences of Chicana/Latina college students.

And finally, the third section discusses the few Pacific Northwest studies that focus on

Chicana/Latina experiences.

Literature Pertaining to Chicana/o students in the United States

There are more traditional empirical studies focusing on Latina/o students' "crises" or

"failures," than there are studies emphasizing the Latina/o students' academic achievements.

According to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (1995), the expectations for "success" of Latina

and Latino students has been colored by experiences of societal hostility and discrimination for

several decades. For instance, the discussion about inequality in education has shifted direction

from a focus on *unequal educational opportunities* provided by the educational system to the

"failures" or *unequal performance* of Latinas/os compared to their White counterparts (e.g.,

achievement gap.) employing the "blaming the victim" approach (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995;

Love, 2004; Segura, 1975; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Villenas, 1996).

The portrayal of being poor, lazy, and uneducated has negatively impacted Latina/o

student performance in the education system (hooks, 1992; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995;

Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001a; Valencia, 1998; Villenas, 1999; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi,

1986). Similarly, Latina/o students tend to be stereotyped as unmotivated, irresponsible,

disrespectful, apathetic, and lazy, and perceived as academic under-achievers (Ogbu & Matute-

Bianchi, 1986). Latina/o students are also portrayed as individuals who make poor choices, drop

out of school, participate in gang-related activities, and ultimately generalized Latinas/os as criminals and teen mothers (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Further complicating the state of affairs of Latinos are current political debates surrounding immigration issues, welfare, crime, and affirmative action, which serve to reinforce negative stereotypes and portrayals of Latina and Latino students. Unfortunately, these disparaging portrayals of Latinos are not a new phenomenon; rather, such discourses have been constructed, presented, and reproduced throughout history, becoming ingrained in the belief system of society in the United States. It is salient to emphasize that although the reproduction of these negative ideologies may be explained by reference to contemporary discourses entrenched in social structures; attention must also be paid to the historical continuity of such negative stereotypes, representations, and portrayals of Latinas/os, especially in higher education.

The heartrending reality is that the school system itself has been the major orchestrator in the reproduction, dissemination, legitimization, and normalization of such negative assumptions, perceptions and antagonistic attitudes toward Latina/o students (Dimitriadis & Carlson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2005; Yosso, 2000). For instance, the traditional deficit ideologies that continue to exist in schools have contributed to the prevalence of this negative discourse. These traditional deficit ideologies focus on the students as the major problem, while utterly disregarding the many forces of power within the school environment that constrain the ability of Latinas/os to "succeed" and achieve their full potential. Daniel Solórzano and Ronald Solórzano (1995) examined these deficit ideologies closely and arranged them in three theoretical frameworks: the biological and cultural deficits, social and cultural reproduction, and resistance ideologies.

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These authors explained that the biological deficit ideology asserts that Latina/o students do not do well in school due to their biological make-up, which lacks the traits necessary for success within the educational and social system (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). In other words, the biological deficit theorists assumed that Latina/o students were, by and large, genetically deficient and accordingly incapable of comprehending complex thoughts or engaging in the higher order of thinking required by schools. Cultural deficit ideologies, on the other hand; alleged that the culture of Latinas/os is one of the main deficit factors (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) claiming that their values, beliefs, and practices recreates the lowered expectations of their groups and prevents them from progressing as White students do. Additionally, these cultural deficit models also "name the internal social structure of families of color as deficient," blaming the "disorganized female-headed families; devaluing Spanish or non-standard English spoken in the home; and patriarchal or matriarchal family structure" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 4). The deficit ideologies purport to look at Latinas/os as the problem, and label them as "at risk" or "culturally deficient." These models reinforce that the cultural values and traditions of Latina/o students are "dysfunctional, and therefore cause low educational and occupational attainment" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 4).

Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu (1986), under his cultural capital theory concluded that the students of color were not able to "succeed" due to the lack of cultural capital that was demanded by the schools. Cultural capital is the knowledge that is highly valued in education and is defined as White upper and middle class culture which including their "ways of talking, acting, and socializing, as well as language practices, value, and styles of dress and behavior" (McLaren, 1997, p. 193). Therefore, Latina/o students are portray as culturally deficient in the educational system for decades, reinforcing the negative discourse and blaming Latina/o students for their

own educational outcomes as well as for failing to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Valencia, 1998; Valencia & Solórzano, 1998).

Moreover, the social reproduction ideology, which is constructed by these deficit ideologies, allows the societal structures to perpetuate a cycle of educational "failure" and poverty. For instance, since students of color are biologically and culturally deficient according to these deficit ideologies, schools prepare them for the workplace by replicating the division of labor. Consequently, the latter explains the process through which students begin to learn about the specific roles they will eventually inhabit in the workplace. In other words, once individuals are indoctrinated, they become part of the flawed social structure, which feeds into itself, thus creating a never ending cycle. These self-fulfilling prophecies and reflexive relationships are viewed as a *social reproduction loop* in which structures such as the educational system produce subjects that in turn produce structures completing the recidivist cycle of low educational achievement among students of color.

This can be interpreted as schools preparing the children of Latino families to become blue-collar workers as their parents, their grandparents, and the ancestors before them. Similarly, the social economic status of families of color may correspond with their children's socioeconomic status after high school graduation. Furthermore, Solórzano and Solórzano (1995) also stated that "the hierarchically structured patterns of values, norms, and skills that characterize the U.S. workplace are mirrored or correspond to the social dynamics of daily classroom life" (p. 45) for students of color.

Resistance theories are different from social and cultural reproduction theories. The importance of this contribution to the field of education is the acknowledgement that individuals

are not simply acted on by structures, but by the negotiations and struggles with these structure—human agency (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). By introducing this lens to analyze students participating in the educational system, scholars realized that students were not just passively participating; rather, they resisted the oppression of the educational system in many ways, including rejecting to collaborate and participate in class activities.

Unsurprisingly, due to these deficit ideologies, schools continue portraying Latinas/os as "disadvantaged" students—students whose race and class background have left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities, and cultural capital to enter the mainstream arena (Valenzuela, 1999). These deficit ideologies continue to be widely cited, believed, and applied in the curricula across the country. Educators who advocated pedagogical styles rooted in such ideologies continue explaining educational inequity through a deficit model, thereby legitimizing the belief that Latinas/os and other minority students are culturally and biologically deprived. This deficit ideology blames the student for not "succeeding" in this "meritocracy."

Therefore, this study deconstructs and critically analyzes these negative hegemonic practices embedded in schooling that affects Chicana/Latina college students in the Pacific Northwest.

Devaluing Chicanas Epistemologies

Traditional hegemonic discourses, such as the deficit ideologies, continue to look at the students of color as "at risk" or "failures" in general. These labels seem to suggest that only students are to blame for their failures, and institutional responsibility *plays no role* in the performance of these students. In other words, the students have been scrutinized and the *epistemic modus operandi* of the educational system has been overlooked; thus, blaming the

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student for his or her failures (Solórzano, 1994, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Valencia, 1997).

With all the deficit models described above considered, one could conclude that Latino culture and language are worthless and deficient, devaluing Latina/o epistemologies. Similarly, students who do not possess the targeted cultural capital demanded by schools are often perceived by educators as students who resist schooling and authority, rather than being perceived as students who, through their own agency, resist the hegemonic ideological practices that produce cultural genocide and, consequently, social stratification. As the negative discourse continues to be disseminated in the educational system, it becomes legitimized which results in prejudice and discrimination that ultimately affects Latina/o students (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Remberger, 1999; Solórzano, 1994, 1995; Solórzano et al, 2005; Valencia, 1991). Once legitimized, this negative discourse grows roots through the social structures and becomes the norm, the way of life, and the status quo, despite insufficient empirical evidence to support these claims (Solórzano, 1991; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1998).

Such negative school interactions embedded in prejudice and negative assumptions have affected Latinas'/os' self-identity and are often reflected in their poor academic achievements, which ultimately forces many to dropout. The increasing phenomenon of students dropping-out due to these factors is presented by Espinoza-Herold and Landson Billings as a "pushed out" action by the educational system (Espinoza-Herold, 2003, p.1; Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9). Similarly, because of the homogenized U.S. school curriculum, Latinas/os find their own cultural capital held alien and invisible, resulting in Latinas'/os' lowered self-esteem, prolonged periods of linguistic silencing, and poor academic performance (McLaren & Gutierrez, 1997; Ortiz,

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1995; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995a, 1995b; Valencia, 1991). Thus, negative

interactions can have an exacerbating effect on Latina/o students' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and

self-identity. These negative interactions are due to the negative perceptions, antagonistic

sentiments, stereotypes, misunderstanding, and cultural differences prevailing in educational

settings.

Additionally, the notion of social mirroring holds that the formation of Latina/o students'

identities and self-worth is affected by people's perceptions that are reflected onto them (Suárez-

Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2000). In simple terms, social mirroring refers to an individual's

interpretation and internalization of the messages from their own point of view and based on

their socioeconomic background. This is a self-reflection of what an individual sees from the

point of view of another. Society, which includes school officials and the media, among others,

reflects images through the social mirror to Latinas about their ethnic group. When the reflected

image is generally positive, Latinas will be able to feel that they are worthwhile and competent,

hence potentially leading to a positive outcome in their educational and career goals.

However, when negative social mirroring of Latinas is being consistently beamed to the

general population by the media, it is extremely difficult to maintain an unblemished sense of

self-worth (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). These images disseminated in our communities are

consistently negative and the consequences of this social mirroring are visible in Latina/o

students in critical research studies that utilize "bottom-up" methodologies, bringing Latina/o

voices and experiences to the forefront. For instance, the LISA study, by Suárez-Orozco and

Suárez-Orozco (2000), illustrated that when asking Latina/o students about the mainstream

dominant perception of their ethnic group, they overwhelmingly responded with the negative

stereotypes that existed in mainstream discourses. These stereotypes included the portrayal of

Latinas as low academic achievers who make poor choices, drop out of school, participate in gang related activities, and become criminals and teen mothers.

Although the responses from the students according to these authors were something along the lines of "I'll show you" or perhaps defending themselves and denying such stereotypes, these students most likely internalized these negative messages and responded with self-doubt and shame manifesting the self-fulfilling prophecy of these negative stereotypes. This social mirroring along with a lack of self positive reinforcement, shame, disconnection, a sense of a lack of belonging, marginalization from school curricula, and even the devaluation of culture and language, have deeply affected Latinas' confidence. Hence, these negative stereotypes and perceptions not only influence how society views Latinas, but how they view themselves (Rodríguez & Villaverde, 1999; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Moreover, this "marginalizing and de-legitimizing" of Latinas/os cultural knowledge serve the further deterioration of their self-worth, self-confidence, and their inability to perform in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9). Nevertheless, all the hegemonic discursive practices and dominant discourse that sustain an inequitable society are washed away under the guise of *meritocracy* and *individualism*; hence, those who fail to become educated are alleged to have earned their positions in a large and exploited working class.

This study counters the latter discourse by bringing college enrolled Chicana/Latina voice to the forefront and illustrating their struggles, challenges, confusions, frustrations, and negotiations through their own perspective. Moreover, I will provide a critical lens in which to examine the impact of hegemonic discourses over individuals which have served as an impetus for the creations of social inequalities, and the asymmetrical relations of power that dominated, control, and maintain the social system in which Latinas reside.

Intersectionality of Race, Class and, Gender
in the United State

Social inequality along racial, social class and gendered lines are sustained in the United States with the assistance of the educational system (Dimitriadis & Carlson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2005; Yosso, 2000). In this study, I argue that there are several levels of social inequality affected by U.S. value systems. To discuss the intersection of social inequalities that describe the life of a Chicana/Latina it is first necessary to examine the racism, sexism, and class status in this society. As I stated above, class and ethnicity play an important role in the educational curriculum. Sexism functions much like racism. The lack of value for women results in their oppression in several segments of society. Like racism, it has become normalized, so much so that many people feel a division by gender is good and natural. Thus, this intersection of race, class, and gender becomes most apparent in the study of discrimination and social inequalities. To be discriminated against because one is a minority group member, generally, produces marginalization and isolation.

However, recognizing that racism, sexism, and classism even exist remains a challenge for most people in the United States. The passage of Title IX, Civil Rights legislation, affirmative action and the president-elect Barack Obama have provided a narrow understanding of social justice and a sense of overcoming racial, sexual, and class discrimination in the United States. Unfortunately, this society continues to face these challenges as discrimination, prejudice, and inequality remain embedded within institutions, are present in our communities, and at times are reproduced by subordinated groups.

Issues of race have always been referred to as a hegemonic dualism between Black and White and not embracing the premise of "*human emancipation,*" (Horkheimer, 1982) hence

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denying the existence of discrimination, prejudices, and antagonistic sentiments directed against other people of color such as Latinos. Therefore, in the class room, this dualism has blurred the racial issues being confronted by so many Chicana/o and Latina/o students, even though similar patterns of discrimination and negative perceptions regarding black students have been revealed, particularly in the educational system (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). For instance, Black, Latina/o, American Indian, and other students of color are commonly described as deficient, disadvantaged, culturally deprived, and "at risk"—or simply as "failures." Nevertheless, unlike Black students, Latina/o students face discrimination due to their nationality, language, immigration status, cultural values and traditions. For instance, the devaluation of their Spanish language, and/or the common expression of "*go back to your country*" have been examples of racial/ethnic microaggressions. These racial microagressions are the cornerstone for *de jure* and *de facto* segregated schooling for Latina/o students as well as the historical and current devaluation of their knowledge, values, languages, cultures, and traditions. While *de jure* racial discrimination may no longer exist overtly in the United States, education systems and patterns of racial exclusion continue today in a de *facto* state through negative portrayals and perspectives which are also reflected in mainstream society, hence affecting policies of anti-affirmative action and other discursive practices. These subtle ways of discrimination have become difficult to detect.

For instance, "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs'" (Pierce, et al., 1978, p. 66) or "subtle insults (verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solórzano et al., 2000) is behavior that is allowed to exist under the disguise of freedom of speech in various educational settings. Other discrimination is less subtle, but permitted and legitimized by the legal system,

such as Initiative 409 in the state of Washington. This proposed initiative requires state and local

government agencies to cooperate with the federal government in enforcing immigration laws.

Under this initiative, state employers would be required to verify the immigration status of

employees and subject them to penalties if they did not comply. It requires verification of

immigration status of patients in hospitals, students in public school and nonprofit organizations

such as churches. However, these types of initiatives and immigration policies not only affect

undocumented individuals, but also the Latino population in general because it serves to

reinforce negative stereotypes and create negative portrayals of Latinas/os to justify

discrimination. Thus, the Latina/o movement is currently engaged in a struggle to achieve equal

rights and justice for 12 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

In the students' minds, these initiatives reinforce preconceived notions that they were not

welcome or wanted in their communities, opening opportunities by the mainstream to

discriminate against Latinas/os for their ethnicity, nationality, language, and, at times, legal

status. As stated before, history has undeniably illustrated how school hostility, discrimination,

oppression, subordination, and deculturation (Spring, 2000) of Chicana/o and Latinas/os has

resulted in the reproduction of racism, classism, and other sources of subordination such as

nationality and language. However, the importance of this study is that I utilize the

"intersectional approach" rooted in critical race theory as a vehicle to analyze the lived

experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest, where few studies have been

conducted on the subject matter.

The concept of intersectionality has been defined as the oppression that arises out of the

combination of various forms of discrimination, which together produce something unique and

distinct from any one form of discrimination. Analyzing race and gender separately would not

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be equivalent to the analysis of their intersectional relationship because "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 24). Indeed, intersectionality is the conceptualization of the problem that attempts to capture both the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more axes of subordination (Crenshaw, 2000).

The recent existing volume of research that focused on girls' strengths and Latina experiences in educational settings include the work titled *Urban Girls* by Leadbeater and Way (1996) and *Women without Class: Girls, Race and Identity* by Julie Bettie (2003). Bettie (2003), through an ethnographic study grounded in a poststructuralist feminist theory, showed how Latinas and White adolescents negotiated gender, class, and race in a high school located in California. Bettie's work has inspired me, not only for her unpopular but important truths about the lives of young Mexican-Americans, but also for her visible gaps, disconnections, and unrevealed social structures that are very present in the lives of Chicanas/Latinas. This study neglected to acknowledge Chicanas'/Latinas' hybrid identities which are not only composed of intersections of races, class, and gender, but also cultures, languages, nationalities, and religions within the context of social and cultural power formations which have been reproduced for centuries. It is at these cross-roads where Latinas struggle and negotiate as they develop their identities.

With a focus on Chicana/Latina college students and their experiences in a socially unequal society, this study utilizes an intersectional approach focusing on the socially constructed assumptions, biases, perceptions, and stereotypes of Chicanas/Latinas rooted in racism, sexism, classism, and also nationality, language, and religion. In this study I argue that

college Chicana/Latina college students in the Pacific Northwest have unique experiences with multiple forms of oppression.

Studies of Chicanas in Educational Settings
in the Pacific Northwest

There are a few studies that address Chicanas/os in the Pacific Northwest (Alamillos, 2004; Backer, 1995; Gambia, 2000; Maldonado & Garcia, 1995; Slatta, 1976); however, these studies focus mainly on agriculture and in Latina/o experiences in farm labor communities (Gamboa, 2000). This is due to the growing work force of seasonal farmworkers migrating to the Pacific Northwest, including Mexican Americans from the southwest of the United States as well as immigrants from Mexico. The migration to this region has occurred since the early 1900s, but it was not until recently that Washington and Oregon have felt the impact of a drastic increase in the population of immigrants and migrant workers.

The voices of Chicanas/Latinas have been absent in the scholarly literature with the exception of a dissertation by Valdéz (2007) and a report created by Dr. Gonzales-Berry, Mendoza, and Plaza (2006). Dr. Valdéz' (2007) work is one of the few studies in this region utilizing Chicana feminist theory to describe the leadership experiences of four college students from farm working backgrounds.

Although there are several social science studies about Latinas/os students outside the Pacific Northwest that have provided more in-depth descriptive accounts of critical experiences facing Latina/o students in their education, there is a lack of inclusion on students' perspective to any substantial degree. These studies were objective and relied exclusively on the dominant (school) discourse, not on the student's "voice." Only a few recent qualitative works have even

begun to focus more specifically on student "voice" and narrative (e.g., Conchas, 2006; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano et al, 2005; Yosso, 2000).

As the percentage of the population of Chicanas/Latinas continues to increase at a dramatic rate in the Pacific Northwest, the number of Chicana/Latina students in four-year institutions is still small and they remain seriously underrepresented in higher education. It has become of the utmost importance that scholars begin to address Latinas' educational needs and assess the quality of education being provided in our educational institutions.

Summary

The negative representations (stereotypes), hegemonic ideologies, and antagonistic attitudes toward Latinas prompted my interest in exploring how working-class Pacific Northwest Latinas attending college construct their identities while challenging and resisting the intersections of these multiple forms of oppression.

In this study, I post three preliminary research questions which are; 1) how do multiple systems of oppression embedded in socially constructed gender roles, racial stereotypes, and other negative preconceived notions impact Chicanas'/Latinas' academic goals and life achievements? 2) How do Latinas negotiate, disrupt, and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression and what tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance do they employ? Finally, 3) how do they develop a positive sense of self-identity?

In order to address the first question, I illuminated the multiple intersections of oppression or multiple systems of oppression and social inequalities impacting college Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest by utilizing Chicana feminist epistemology and Latina/o critical theory. The second question was addressed by centering and legitimizing

college Chicanas'/Latinas' "ways of knowing" by analyzing how Chicanas/Latinas reconfigure the systems of oppression focusing on their tactics, counter-stories, negotiations, and disruptions of hegemonic dominant discourse. Finally, the third question was addressed by exploring their strategies of resistance, and the established mechanism that propels Chicanas/Latinas attending college in the Pacific Northwest to pursue their educational goals and develop a positive self-identity.

This study provides a bottom-up approach by centering the knowledge and experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in higher education, bringing the voices of Latina/o students into educational settings as well as enriching critical race theory (CRT), Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit), and Chicana feminist literature.

I shed light on Chicanas/Latinas struggles and challenges and the negotiations of their identities, academic efforts, frustrations, and life aspirations. This critical analysis includes Latinas' perceptions of and disagreements with socially constructed roles that are imposed upon them and how these socially constructed roles impact their goals and aspirations. This study utilizes Latino/a critical theory (LatCrit) and Chicana feminist epistemology as theoretical frameworks to critically analyze hegemonic discourses as well as to deconstruct Latinas' perceptions of their lives and educational experiences at their postsecondary educational institutions in the Pacific Northwest.

Moreover, my aim is to expand upon existing educational scholarship on Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest. By bringing Pacific Northwest Latinas' voices to the forefront and providing their own stories of encouragement and drawbacks in their life journeys, I reveal not only the negative stereotypes and assumptions embedded in the dominant western

society, but also the assumptions, perceptions, and socially constructed roles within the Latino culture, which continues to constrain and limit Latinas' opportunities.

However, it is not my intent to generalize the experiences of Chicana/Latina college students in this study. I offer neither unifying perspectives nor homogenous descriptions of this group. Instead, what I offer is something more modest—personal reflections from the participants on their unique "critical ways of knowing" and my own best analysis based on my experiences as a Chicana, an activist, an educator, an ally, a mentor, a sister, a aunt, and as a "native" researcher.

I suspect that some readers may find my presentation of this study to be insufficiently balanced. To this accusation, I stand guilty as charged. I am a Chicana, after all; my views on this study correspond more closely to my own positionality. I am angry about racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. I am angry about injustice, hegemonic politics, slavery, oppression of any kind to any human being, and the building of a wall (at the U.S.-Mexico border) to segregate our nation. I believe that government should not impose on an individual's religious beliefs, including my own. I believe in an education with multiple pedagogical styles. I believe in the integration and acceptance of multiple perspectives. I do not believe in "one method fixes all problems," nor standardized testing. I reject a politics that is based solely on race, gender, or sexual orientation. I believe the United States must pay attention to marginalized groups in society for a social transformation. With these views, I begin this study. Before providing a description of the chapters, I introduce some definitions below.

Definitions

Within this section definitions of pertinent terms are presented. While these may not be universally accepted, these definitions are applied to the designated terms for the context of this study. For instance, in this study *first generation* Latinas refers to those who are foreign-born and came to the United States after the age of eighteen and entered the workforce immediately after their arrival. *Second-generation* refers to those who are U.S-born Latinas of at least one foreign-born parent. On the other hand, due to changes in migrant patterns affected by family reunification and also the emergence of a transnational labor force, the second generation concept in migration studies has been expanded to include foreign-born children who arrived in the United States at an age that was younger than five years old. Those foreign-born individuals who were brought to the United States between the ages of five and adolescence were not classified as either first- or second-generation according to such studies, thus the term "one-and-a-half generation" or "generation 1.5" has been coined to identify these individuals. Scholars agree that this distinct cohort has important differences in terms of their experiences when compared to first- and second- generation Latinas (see Suárez -Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2000).

Nevertheless, it is important to differentiate *first-generation college students* with *first-generation Latinas* in the United States. First-generation college students are Latinas whose parents have not attended college. All ten participants in this study are first-generation college students; five of these ten participants are one-and-a-half generation (born in Mexico and brought to the U.S between the ages of five and ten) and five are second-generation Latinas.

I use the term *Mexican* as a comprehensive term to refer to those who trace their ancestry to Mexico. It is not a particularly precise term in that it refers to a group encompassing a great deal of diversity, ranging from those who have been born in the United States to recent immigrants. The terms Mexican and Mexican American, which are frequently used for

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classification purposes in the United States, tend to be based on the place of birth and/or legal status of individuals. However, such legal classifications break down upon examination of the current study's participants. For example, some of the participants were born in the United States, but consider themselves to be Mexican due in large part to their tight connection with the Mexican culture and the fact that they trace their ancestry directly to Mexico. In contrast, other participants were born in Mexico, but spent much of their childhood in the United States and made a distinction between their legal nationality and their preferred identity label as Latinas and Chicanas.

Like the term Mexican, the term immigrant is quite complex. In simplistic terms, it refers to those individuals who move from one country to another in search of economic opportunities. Traditionally, in the United States, immigration was strictly seen as a one-way ticket. An immigrant leaves the home country behind and settles permanently in the United States. Over the course of one or more generations, immigrants and their children abandon cultural practices rooted in the home country and increasingly adopt those of the U.S. mainstream. Although this is commonly perceived to represent the history of immigrants to the U.S., the reality has been more complex.

For example, Wyman (1993) has documented the phenomenon of immigrant families that maintain strong ties to their cultural homelands as being a part of our national history. Nowhere is the complexity of the term "immigrant" more apparent than with respect to Mexican immigrants. Unlike European immigrants, the proximity of the homeland for Mexican immigrants is quite close. However, the definition of the term is not yet complete and remains problematic for a number of reasons. First, it appears to be idealized or static and does not take into consideration the subjectivities of the immigrants themselves nor does it encompass the life-

span of the immigrants. Many Mexicans may immigrate to the United States with the intention of returning to Mexico, but in the end do not do so. Some immigrate to the United States with no intention of returning to Mexico. Others may spend most of their lives on United States soil and later return to Mexico upon retirement. Still others may spend several years in the United States and several years in Mexico, since they have grown roots in both countries. Several of the participants of the current study travel to Mexico to "visit," but do not consider Mexico a country where they want to settle. Even though some of these immigrants were born in Mexico and visit their birth town, they consider their "lives" to be in the United States.

Furthermore, the word *immigrant* has become an intensely controversial issue as of late. Overall, the U. S. mainstream society has a more negative view of immigrants than in prior decades. According to a new Gallup Poll in which 2,388 adults nationwide were interviewed— including 868 Whites, 802 Blacks, and 502 Latinas/os—the findings reveal negative sentiments associated with immigrants:

> Average Americans [sic] believe that immigrants have had more of a negative
> than beneficial impact on the crime rate, the economy, social and moral values,
> and job opportunities, according to the recent Gallup poll… [The study] showed
> that 58 percent of Americans [sic] believe the crime situation is worse because of
> immigrants, while 46 percent say this group of people has negatively impacted the
> economy in general. In addition, 37 percent of Americans [sic] say social and
> moral values have declined due to immigrants. (Vu, 2007).

Several media outlets have polarized negative sentiments about Mexican immigrants in the United States. Unfortunately, this negative connotation disseminated by the media and politicians has adversely impacted the Latino community. For instance, several Latinas/os have

experienced the effects of an increasing anti-immigrant sentiment on behalf of law enforcement officers who request documentation to prove their immigration status. Despite being born in this country, they are treated as alien creatures far from human dignity. For those not born in the United States, their legal status in the country affects their access to social services such as healthcare and education, and can provoke worries about their families returning to the country of origin even against their own wishes. Several participants of this study have been at the receiving end of this anti-immigrant sentiment and have experienced discrimination because they fit the stereotype profile of being undocumented.

The term *migrant* generally refers to a person who moves within the boundaries of a single nation in order to find work. In the United States, the term migrant is associated with agricultural workers who move from state to state at various times of the year in order to follow the harvest of the different crops. Several of my participants' parents were migrants for a select number of years; some remain active today as migrant workers. Most have moved from California to various cities in the state of Washington following the seasonal work. This has resulted in some participants having attended more than five primary schools.

The term *Hispanic* will not be used in this study except in cases where it already exists in the context of a quotation or citation. The term Hispanic is derived from the word Hispañiola, or Spain. I reject the use of the term Hispanic for Latin American people because it linguistically denies such people their roots, or country of origin. Direct descendants from Latin American cultures are Latino. See Hayes-Bautista & Chapa (1987) for further discussion on the term Hispanic.

The term *Latina* or *Latino* is remarkably diverse and encompasses hundreds of communities with distinct languages, cultures, philosophies, and educational systems that defy a

simple generalization. Ideologically, I resist generalizations about Latinas/os because so many stereotypes rest on the mistaken assumption that all Latinos are alike. This term encompasses distinct groups of people from Mexico, Central and South America, and Spain as well as those born in the United States who are descendants from these nations. Similarly, the term Black or African-American refers to many different groups, including recent immigrants from Somalia and Ethiopia. However, for brevity's sake, in this study the terms Latina, Latino, American Indian and Black are used to describe individuals from these racial/ethnic groups unless the author of the cited research uses a different term (e.g., Mexican, Native American or African-American).

For the purpose of this study, *higher education* is defined as post-secondary education beyond high school or grade twelve. Higher education is also identified as or referred to throughout this document as academia and the academy. *Culture* is defined as "socially shared cognitive codes and maps, norms of appropriate behavior, assumptions about values and world view, and lifestyle in general" (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991, p.17), as well as "the customs, habits, skills, technology, arts, values, ideology, science, and religious and political behavior of a group of people" (Barker, 1995, p. 87).

I used the term *positionality* to refer to the place that the student stands in relation to others and how this unique environment shapes the individual's epistemology. According to poststructural feminism the term of positionality is a place in which people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships and power, which can be analyzed and changed. Understanding positionality means understanding where one stands with respect to power. It is important to understand the positionality of each participant to provide a more holistic view of their own experiences and reality. Once we

understand their positionality, we will have a standpoint from which to challenge power and oppression.

Moreover, in this study, *discourse* does not simply denote language in practice but "rather 'competing ways of giving meaning to the world, which imply differences in the organization of social power' and have implications for the social practices in which we engage" (Bettie, 2003). That is, the concept of discourse is viewed as a mechanism to create meaning that normalizes and legitimizes ideologies. However, the normalization of negative ideologies creates and legitimizes prejudice among societies. Consequently, the collective constellations of negative ideologies are implemented, institutionalized, and politicized in social discursive practices resulting in hegemonic practices and oppression. Unfortunately, these ideologies or public meanings (discourse) have assisted in the construction of our identities.

With this definition, I intend to provide you with a glimpse of the life experiences of Chicana/Latina college students in the Pacific Northwest. The following section is a brief outline of the chapters that comprise this dissertation.

Overview of Chapters

In chapter two, I provide the conceptual framework relevant to this study. I will also highlight the research objectives and the methodological approach to the data collection and analysis. Chapter three charts the various theoretical frameworks that guided this methodology and describes the specific methods used to carry out the research. Chapter four brings to the forefront the voices of my participants and describes the multiple layers of oppression which are depicted under the theme, "*The glorieta.*" This broad theme is divided into four main subsections—1) The Intersections of Race and Class on Chicanas/Latinas Life Experiences, 2)

Race, Ethnicity, and Language: Inescapable Realities in U.S. Schools, 3) The Inescapable

Stereotypes: Racialized and Gendered Bodies, 4) The Intersection of Religious Ideologies,

Sexuality, and the Holy Trinity of Race, Class, and Gender, 5) Deslenguadas: Barreras del

Lenguaje [Without Tongue: Language Barriers], and finally, 6) Dilemmas of Race/Ethnicity,

Language, Nationality and Legal Status Troubling Latina Peace of Mind. Moreover, I provide

substantial background on my participants and focus on what each had to say in the interview,

rather than providing theoretical explanations.

In chapter five, I describe the impact of these multiple systematic negative discourses in

the construction of Chicanas'/Latinas' identities and self-esteem. The participants illustrate how

they have negotiated, disrupted, and/or reconfigured these systems of oppression. By doing so,

the participants shed light on the tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance that they

employed in their everyday life in order to overcome the barriers they encounter in academia.

Chapter five also illustrates how Chicana/Latina college students resist these systems of

oppression and how they are able to navigate through troubled waters and develop a positive

sense of self-identity throughout the process. They describe important components in their lives

that helped them to develop a positive sense of self-identity despite the negative experiences they

have had throughout their lives.

Finally, chapter six provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings and connects

them with the voices of the participants in a more explicit manner.   This chapter also concludes

by reinstating the three main questions of the study bringing the participants' voices to a closure.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter begins by outlining the motives for utilizing Latina/o critical theory and Chicana feminist epistemologies. The design of this project was modeled on the frameworks of Latina/o critical theory (LatCrit) (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Fernandez, 2002; Olivas, 1990; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999) and Chicana feminist epistemologies (Alarcon, 1988; Castañeta, 1993; Castillo, 1995; Cordova, 1997; Trujillo, 1998; Ruiz, 1998; Saldívar-Hull, 2000), with a focus on the experiences of Chicana/Latina students in the Pacific Northwest. In order to situate this theoretical framework, I provide a brief topography of the underpinnings that have influenced both fields of thought, followed by illustrating and aligning LatCrit's tenets with Chicana feminist epistemologies, and concluding by describing the suitability of this theoretical framework to analyze Chicana/Latina life experiences in the Pacific Northwest.

Dancing With Theories

After my extensive review of numerous scholarly works, from Marxism to Postmodernism, in search of a theoretical framework for this study, I found myself dancing to numerous rhythmic tones. These expressive and elegantly soaring notes were artistic but disconnected, pleasant but unfulfilling, relaxing yet discomforting. I realized that these theoretical concepts, individually, do not bring justice to the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest, nor did they produced a rhythmically familiar and satisfying melody.

For instance, as a child of farm-working Mexican parents who was raised in Mexico and crossed the U.S-Mexico border in search of a better future, these philosophical perspectives were far from conceptualizing my own experiences as a Chicana/Latina in the United States. The complexity of my social, political, ethnic, racial, national, and economic position, and my world experiences, were absent from these melodies. In fact, when the experiences of Latinas were somewhat visible in this literature, they were disregarded and not legitimized thereby expanding the gap between the academic knowledge and the knowledge of marginalized people of color. I did, however, find satisfying melodies that would bring justice to the Chicana/Latina experiences when encountering the work of Latina/o critical theory (LatCrit) and Chicana feminist epistemologies.

These two schools of thought are well suited to illuminate the type of experiences Chicanas/Latinas in the United States are experiencing. Together, they unveil racism, sexism, and classism, and illuminate obscure operations of power, disrupt the status quo, unsettle neutrality and taken-for-granted negative stereotypes, perceptions, and assumptions about Latinas. This theoretical framework provides the analytical tools necessary to describe my own experiences as a Chicana intellectual, a native researcher, a sister and *comadre* of La Raza by shedding light on the ambivalence and ambiguities of my worlds. Hence, this framework is well-suited to dig deeper into the complexities of the world Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest have experienced.

In other words, as a theoretical framework, LatCrit and Chicana feminism allows me, as the researcher, to utilize a theoretical framework that derives from similar historical, social, political, and cultural perspectives of Chicanas to conceptualize Latinas positionalities. Furthermore, this framework engaged in the critical examination of societal institutions by

creating a space where marginalized voices can be heard.

Before providing a detailed explanation of LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies, I will provide a brief explanation of the historical development of the theoretical perspectives from which LatCrit and Chicana feminism originated. LatCrit is an outgrowth of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which has its fundamental underpinnings entrenched in critical theory, where as Chicana feminism emerged from the second and third wave feminist theorists also influenced by critical theory. Figure 2 illustrates the different philosophical underpinnings in which my theoretical framework is anchored.

Figure 1. A conceptual map of the theoretical eruptions

Critical Theory

| Critical Race Theory | Second &Third Wave Feminism |
| Latina/o Critical Theory | Chicana Feminism |
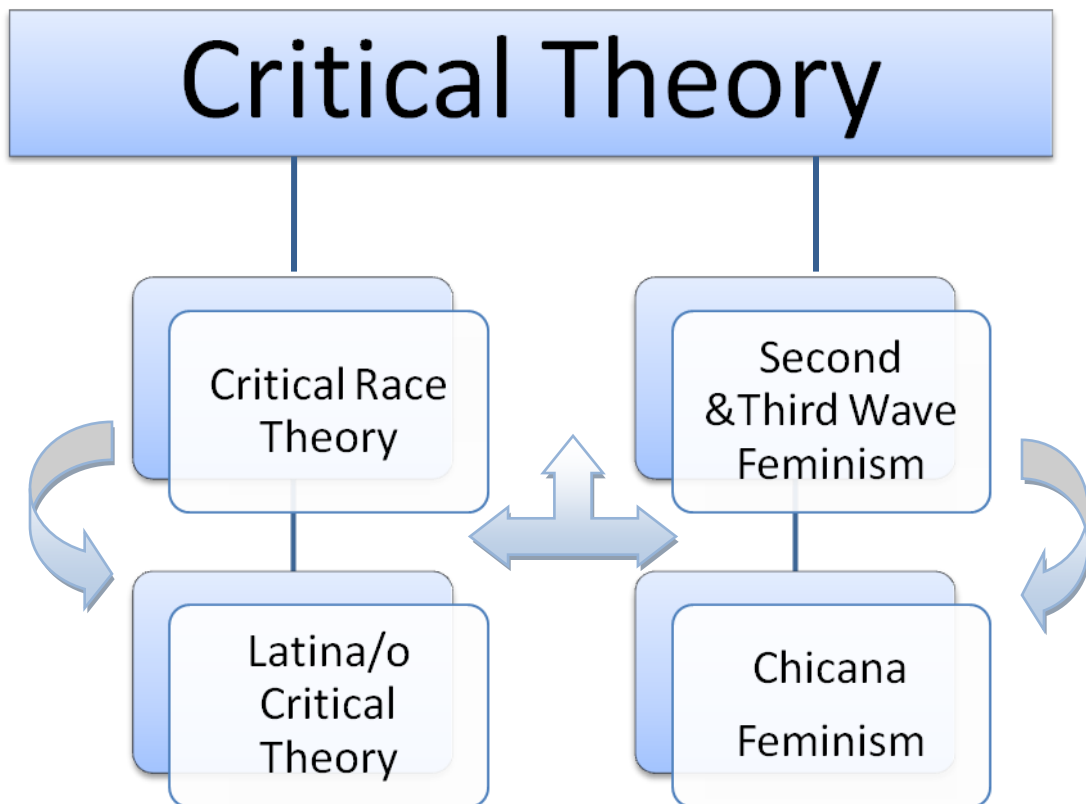
When describing the origins of these theories, it is necessary to go back in history and conceptualize critical theory from its inception. *Critical theory* is the hypocenter of various

eruptions of philosophical underpinning that influence my study and must be viewed as an interdisciplinary theoretical framework where the philosophical concepts of critical theory are the foundation of Latina/o critical theory, which has also influenced Chicana feminist epistemologies. While there are many scholars and activists who remain unnamed in this genealogy, every element is useful to trigger new intellectual ideas and push new boundaries that might not have been visible without the important work of all these intellectuals.

The Expansion of Critical Theory's Paradigms

The works of critical theorists centralized the inequalities in the social and educational settings of marginalized groups. While critical theory is often narrowly defined as the Frankfurt School, which started with philosophers such as Horkheimer and Adorno and extended to Marcuse and Habermas, I argue that any philosophical approach with similar practical aims could be labeled critical theory. Accordingly, this includes the critical works of Marxism and neo-Marxism, feminism, certain works of poststructuralism, post-colonialism, ethnic studies, women's studies, and cultural studies, and cultural nationalist paradigms (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

In my view, critical theory in general and critical educational theory in particular is interdisciplinary in nature. For example, contemporary critical theorists' philosophical approach in the broader sense has expanded widely due to its theoretical premise, which does not solely seek some independent or personal goal, but rather the overarching goal of *"human emancipation"* (Horkheimer, 1982) in circumstances of domination and oppression. *Human emancipation,* according to Horkheimer (1982), is to "liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (p. 244). He suggests that the liberation of human beings can

only be achieved through emancipation—a process by which oppressed and exploited people become sufficiently empowered by obtaining critical consciousness. In short, emancipation is an act of self-reflection and self-consciousness which problematizes all social relationships, particularly the discursive practices of power. Because such theory aims to explain and transform the circumstances that enslave humans, this critical foundation has been embraced by many theorists including Antonio Gramsci (1971), Paulo Freire, (1972), and Henry Giroux (1983). The philosophical perspectives of Gramsci, Freire, and Giroux contributed to the eruption and outgrowth of other theoretical perspectives which expanded the critical education theory's paradigm. To set the stage for my theoretical framework, I will describe briefly the major philosophical concepts of each theorist.

Gramsci (1971), the founder of the Italian communist party and the author of the theory of cultural hegemony, is among the first scholars to expand the parameters of critical theory in education. The premise of this theory is that societies have maintained social hierarchies not through coercive force, but through a process of consent and acquiescence-hegemony. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, is the form of cultural dominance over other cultures. Gramsci suggested that Western societies are becoming more innovative in the manner in which they control and dominate the "other". He described hegemony as not limited to violence and political and economic coercion, but as also including ideological coercion through a culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie become the common set of values for all classes (Gramsci, 1971). This hegemonic mechanism shifts gradually from brutal physical means to a form of "moral leaders in a society who participate in and reinforce universal common sense notions on what is considered to be the truth within a society" (p. 7).

Consequently, Gramsci's scheme prompted critical theorists to realize that cultures

cannot be separated from the ideologies and social systems from which they emerge. Likewise, ideologies cannot be divorced from their cultures. Social systems and ideology interlock in complex and often unexpected ways. According to Gramsci, no ideology is natural, or simply dominant, or subordinate; rather, each ideology occurs in a complex web of social relations so ingrained that even resistance can reinforce relationships and re-create practices that favor dominant interests. Gramsci's arguments prompted educational theorists to critically analyze ideologies and their complexity and power. Moreover, Gramsci illustrated how these hegemonic ideologies are engraved in social structures.

Moreover, as something of a precursor to postmodern theorists, Gramsci also questioned the possibility of objective knowledge and championed the role of ideology in the creation of knowledge. Following a tradition associated with Gramsci, critical researchers aim to understand the relationship between societal structures (especially economic and political) and ideological patterns of thought that constrain the human imagination and limit the opportunities for confronting, disrupting, and ultimately changing the unjust social systems.

By the same token, in the field of education, Freire (1972) assisted in expanding critical theory's parameters by asserting that the oppressed underclass has not received the benefits of education. His criticism was largely of the educational system of indoctrination, enforcing conformity to dominant values, and social reproduction in which one is tutored into submission and acceptance of an oppressed and subordinate status. Freire suggested an emancipatory educational procedure, which involved subverting the master/slave dialectic. In order to do so, oppressed individuals would undertake a transformation of consciousness-raising *(conscientizaçao),* and engage in dialogue with the oppressor (Freire, 1971). To accomplish this transformation of consciousness, also referred to as critical consciousness, Freire (1972)

suggested developing a "pedagogy of the oppressed" that required the creation of learning processes that assist individuals at bettering themselves through social transformation and empowerment, rather than by conforming to the dominant views and values.

Juxtaposed to Freire (1972), Giroux (1983) developed the theory of resistance, which is typified as the most rigorous critical "treatment of ideology, consciousness, and culture [to]…move reproduction theory past the theoretical impasse imposed by the structure-agency dualism" (MacLeod, 1995, p. 21). The concept of resistance is used in educational research to explain and interpret various student behaviors in schools that indicate the existence of tensions and conflicts between school and the wider society to which the student belongs. To conceptualize this argument, let's utilize the reproduction theory.

Reproduction theorist alleged that the function of schools is to reproduce the ideology of dominant groups in society, their forms of knowledge, and the distribution of skills needed to maintain the social division of labor (Giroux, 1983); therefore, resistance indicates an ideological stand emanating from perception of schooling as a reproduction process, rather than an equalization process. Paraphrasing the words of Giroux, resistance is a response to the current educational system, a response rooted in "moral and political indignation, not psychological dysfunction" (Giroux, 1983a, p. 22). The theory of resistance separated the human agency from the structure, bringing to the forefront the significance of individual autonomy, and centering the structural determinants that lie outside the immediate experience of a "human actor" (MacLeod, 1995).

Resistance theories introduced the active role of human agency in the institutional contexts that reproduced social inequality. In his work, Giroux (1983) insisted that structure and human agency are seen to affect each other and accordingly, he urged critical theorists to

conceptualize the "complex ways in which people mediate and respond to the interface between their own life experiences and structures of domination and constraints" (MacLeod, 1995, p. 21).

With the philosophical principles of critical theory, Gramsci (1971), Freire (1972), and Giroux (1983), sought to deconstruct the system structure, ideologies and human agency in order to promote the development of individuality, citizenship, community, social justice, and the strengthening of democratic participation in all forms of life. Nevertheless, the work of these critical theorists focused only on class oppression. More recent works have argued that focusing only on one form of oppression denied the frequent interconnections to be found between several other forms of subordination.

Thus, contemporary critical theory has extended its terrain to be more comprehensive as other theories emerged, including critical race theory (CRT). In fact, CRT emerged as a contestation of frustrated scholars who viewed critical theory as "mute in relation to race" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 131) and urged other scholars to distance themselves from reductionist theories (Sandoval, 2000), especially colorblind theories that focused on education. Thus, as a result of this skepticism because of the absence of race in numerous studies rooted in critical theory, critical race theory penetrated the field of education with unprecedented speed.

The Emergence of Critical Race Theory

Theorists including Richard Delgado (1995, 1998), Kimberle Crenshaw (1988, 1995), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, 1998), Delgado G. Solórzano (1994, 1995, 1997), Jean Stefancic (1997), and William Tate (1994, 1997) centralized race and racism in critical studies

with the intent to scrutinize practices of the current educational system of the United States and challenge the very foundation of education and its dominant discourses. Yet, it is argued that critical theorists W.E.B. Du Bois and Max Weber were the pioneers of critical race theory for placing race and racism in the driver's seat of their critical studies.

The fundamental difference between critical theory and CRT is that CRT views race as "ordinary...the usual way society does business, the common everyday experiences in people of color" (Delgado & Stefanie, 2001, p. 7). This view of race is one of the major tenets of CRT and is applied meticulously in every CRT study. For instance, instead of asking, "Does racism play a role in educational disparities?" CRT inquires, *"How has racism contributed to the educational disparities, and how can it be dismantled?"* (Howard, 2003, pp. 29-30). Such a question became imperative as I analyzed the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the U.S., educational system. Pillow (2003) explained that race cannot be situated on the margins "as an add-on category." Rather, race ought to be in the driver's seat to theorize and ask critical questions about a range of epistemological, social, structural, cultural, and institutional" discourses (p. 189).

Solórzano (1997) outlined the tenets of CRT within the education field as follows, (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the interdisciplinary perspective.

The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism is a routine consequence in the daily lives of "tens of millions" of its citizens who are alienated and marginalized by the abstract concept of democracy (Marable, 2002, p. 32). The first tenet admits that racism is enmeshed to the point of being "normal, not aberrant in American society" (Delgado, 1995a, p.

xiv). Additionally, the focus on race and racism by CRT which frames "what we do, why we do it and how we do it" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 474) also challenges the dominant ideology by confronting hegemonic practices and challenging dominant principles intertwined in social institutions. In so doing, CRT calls attention to "traditional claims... [that] camouflage...the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 472 see also Calmore, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997; Valdes, 1998a). CRT rejects "color-blindness," race neutrality, and objectivity, instead demonstrating the perpetuation of oppressive conditions specifically because of race.

Furthermore, CRT's commitment to social justice aims to empower groups through the process and the outcomes of critical research. Similarly, another major tenet of CRT is relying on and validating the experiential knowledge of its participants by utilizing storytelling and counter-storytelling. Using the method in CRT-based studies has enhanced awareness of issues in marginalized communities (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989; Fregoso, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; Tate, 1997; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

Since the use of authentic voices is an important tool for deconstructing the experiences of Pacific Northwest Chicanas/Latinas, I use storytelling as one aspect of my methodology. Critical race theorists believe that "without the authentic voices of color...it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities" (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 52). Thus, CRT communicates the experiences of marginalized people and restores their voices. Finally, CRT incorporates historical and interdisciplinary studies to understand contemporary behaviors. In other words, CRT theorists pursue both the breadth and depth of an event, and reject the notion of phenomenon occurring in isolation both

historically and theoretically.

Therefore, critical theorists utilize knowledge from "ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, and other fields to better understand racism" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 473). Other forms of oppression that include the multiple historical and theoretical perspectives that oblige the re-examination of dominant hegemonic frameworks (i.e., cultural deficit theories) also enhance the understanding of racism in the educational setting of Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest.

In summary, CRT offers the potential for systematically centering a race-based analysis in understanding educational inequality and challenges, but more importantly critically analyzes the dominant hegemonic discourses entrenched in the educational system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005). For instance, CRT "challenges the traditional claims the educational system and its institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity" (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 2) without excluding the dominant ideology. This is done with a purpose of illuminating the multiple interceptions of oppression that continue to exist in contemporary times.

In short, the relationship of CRT to education lies in CRT's recognition that contemporary education affects the lives of students of color through the influence of a racist society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998).

Moving beyond CRT to LatCrit

CRT was criticized for creating a Black/White dichotomy in scholarly work during the Civil Rights movements, while CR theorists bemoaned the unrealistic promises and slow pace

of Civil Rights legislation. The use of this dichotomy infuriated many including feminists, lesbians, and other non-Black female scholars of color who stressed that the deconstruction of race and race-based subordination in a multi-cultural society could not be fully understood in terms of only a Black/White paradigm (Valdez, 1996). Despite the premise of CRT and the philosophical perspectives in which it is rooted, this theory has been typified as "androcentric and Afrocentric as well as heterocentric" (Valdez, 1996) for its notorious inability to centralize women, non-African people of color and homosexual-bisexual individuals.

 In other words, critical race theorists' concentration in Black subordination left out everything that existed between the Black/White dichotomy as well as other important interceptions such as nationality and language. Nationality and language are salient interceptions prominent in the lives of Chicanas/Latinas. These concepts helped mark a consciousness of resistance to the repression of language, culture, and race and a recognition of the in-between spaces formed by those with complex identities. Thus, the framework of CRT, utilized individually, has proven to be theoretically insufficient to deconstruct the intersection of subordination that Chicanas/Latinas experience in their everyday lives.

However, is important to clarify that the category of Chicanas/Latinas is not homogeneous, but a conglomeration of several peoples from various cultures. For instance, this group includes but is not exclusively about, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban-American communities (Valdes, 1996). These and other sub-groups are not only composed of different national origins and cultures, but also diverse spectrums of race, religion, class, and sexualy. Therefore, a spin-off of critical race theory emerged as Latina/o critical theory or LatCrit, which remains deeply embedded in critical race theory.

LatCrit emerged from CRT to dispel the myths of the "monolithic Hispanic Other"

(Hidalgo, 1998), and to demonstrate that "the racial dynamic that affects Latinas/os is as distinct from the familiar Black/White dichotomy" (Vargas, 2003, p. 8; see also Espinoza & Harris, 1998; Esquivel, 2003; Rollin-Dow, 2005; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Valdes, 1996).

Race and racism does not affect the Black and the Latino populations in the same way because Latinos' experiences in the United States are shaped differently from Blacks. For example, Latinos, as a group, experience a language barrier that Blacks typically do not, Latinos also have higher illegal immigration rates than Blacks that affect how they see and are seen by the dominant group. Thus, focusing solely on ethnicity, and not on characteristics such as language and immigration status "can hinder our knowledge of the ways in which Latina/o communities are racialized" (Rollin-Dow, 2005, p. 88).

The Relationship between CRT and LatCrit

CRT challenges how research is traditionally conducted by highlighting race to demonstrate the depth of inequality that exists across society, therefore, LatCrit is aligned with CRT to "work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination" (Yosso, 2005, p. 25). CRT and LatCrit are driven by a sense of progressive activism and have infused contemporary race, class, and gender discourses with the purpose of compelling social transformation on behalf of communities traditionally subordinated by dominant social forces (Stefancic, 1997).

CRT and LatCrit framework views race-based forms of subordination as endemic in everyday life and as apparent normative practices within the U.S. culture (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In other words, the purpose of LatCrit, which is rooted in CRT, is to deconstruct and critically analyze the normative practices and discourses in which

individuals do not even realize what present day forms of racism are and the deep ways in which race and racism are systemically poisoning U.S. social institutions. Thus, LatCrit makes visible what is often invisible, taken for granted, or assumed within the knowledge and practice of the dominant group. LatCrit theorists, including Francisco Valdes (1998), Jean Stefancic (1997), Sofia Villenas (1996), Donna Deyhle (1995), Daniel G Solórzano (2001), and Tara J. Yosso (2002) extended the discussion of this theory to address the layers of racialized subordination that encompass Chicana/o and Latina/o experiences.

As already mentioned, CRT brings race to the forefront as an explanatory tool to study the persistence of inequality in our educational system and challenges the way race and racism implicitly or explicitly impact social structures, practices, and discourses. Yet, LatCrit takes this framework to the next step by addressing not only race, but also the intersectionality of ethnicity, class, nationality, immigration, gender, sexuality, language, culture, identity, and phenotype (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005) by utilizing a *bottom-up* approach and centralizing the perceptions, views, and experiences of Chicanas/os and Latinas/os.

Furthermore, while CRT starts the process of understanding the role of race in education, LatCrit seeks to empower stakeholders to work towards remedying the inequalities perpetuated by multiple levels of subordination and inequitable ideologies. Thus, to clarify, LatCrit theory answers the call to action initiated by CRT. Consequently, LatCrit should be understood as supplementary and complementary to CRT. For example, Valdes (1996) suggested that LatCrit theory should "operate as a close cousin-related to CRT in real and lasting ways, but not necessarily living under the same roof' (cited in Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Thus, the philosophical perspectives of CRT ought to be conceptualized as part of LatCrit framework when analyzing Latina, Chicana, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and other *Mestiza*

communities.

Although LatCrit critically examines racism, classism, gender inequalities, discrimination, and other forms of subordination, its research paradigms only focus on the reproduction of hegemonic knowledge and their constraints. In other words, LatCrit focuses on critically analyzing constraints and limitations produced by hegemonic ideologies. In my opinion, this strategy is not sufficient to transform social knowledge and eradicate hegemonic ideologies. Therefore, I integrate or bring forward Chicana feminist epistemologies to this study for its ability to excavate deeper and illuminate the creation of knowledge and problematize the social construction of "meaning," "knowledge," "reality," and the importance of context, ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies. CRT/LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies create a theoretical framework that provides the tools necessary to conceptualize the experiences of Latinas in the United States.

A Historical Development of Chicana Feminism

The second branch in this framework is composed of the different philosophical perspectives that have influenced Chicana feminism. Chicana feminism evolved from prior second-and third-wave feminist underpinnings. The second wave is composed of Marxist, Radical, and Cultural feminists, among others. Third-wave feminists include Postmodernist, Post-colonialist, and Poststructuralist feminists.

In the literature review, I encountered numerous feminist scholars who expressed their disappointment with critical theory. For instance, second-wave feminist scholars have criticized critical theory studies for the failure to call attention to gender and sexuality. But it was not until the eruption of frustrated voices from the third-wave feminists that a significant

disapproval of critical theory occurred including denouncing it as a reductionist theory insisting on the importance of not only sexism and classism, but also other dimensions of subordination.

With the purpose of creating a mental map in order to situate Chicana feminists' political epistemologies in the feminism terrain and with no intentions to devalue any new forthcoming waves, I will only be covering briefly the first three waves of feminist ideologies. It is critically important, however, to acknowledge that there is no single, universal form of feminism that represents or encompasses all feminists. Moreover, the organizational format of this genealogy may suggest that these waves did not overlap in time. But, it is evident that these waves of feminism did and continue to overlap not only with other feminist waves, but with the underpinnings of critical theory which continues to be visible within their developing stage.

The first wave of feminism began during the 19th century as women struggled to achieve basic political rights. This period of activism, however, does not define the beginning of feminism, but illuminated the struggles to gain suffrage and obtain equal rights for women. This first phase, called Liberal feminism, is fundamentally concerned with "demonstrating that women are as fully human as men" and typified as "seeking liberation...freedom, justice, and equality" (Jaggar, 1983). Thus, Liberal feminists were concerned with opening up access to *woman as a category* (and not as class or race) to political, economic, and social aspects of public and private life from which they had been excluded. Their fight was mainly about universal suffrage, education for all and welfare rights (Jaggar, 1983; Sandoval, 2000).

The second stage of feminism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. This wave of feminists also fought for a broader agenda that concentrated on factors such as reproduction, sexuality,

domestic labor, violence in the home, and economic inequality. For instance, Marxist

feminists stated that capitalism, which gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political

confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relations between men and women, are the root of

women's oppression. Unlike Marxist feminists, Radical and Cultural feminists maintain that

women's oppression is the first, most widespread, and deepest oppression resulting from

patriarchal ideologies (e.g., Jaggar, 1983).

On the other hand, Alison M. Jaggar (1983) affirmed that not Liberals, Marxists, nor

Radicals, but Social feminism was the most plausible theory, because it had the potential to

account for all women's oppressions by focusing on public and private spheres of a woman's

life, and believed that "liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic

and cultural sources of women's oppression" (p. 86). She regarded third world feminists' work,

in particular Chicana feminism, as deficient within the feminist praxis. Consequently, Jaggar

omitted Chicana feminists' work, in particular Gloria Anzaldúa's (1989) autobiography by

claiming that they "operat[ed] mainly in the level of description" (p. 11). Unfortunately, her

colonized lens prompted her to legitimize only metaphysical written work in which subjects'

grounded experiences, or pragmatic works[2] had no value in the world of academia.

In short, the counter narratives from Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1983) and

many others, who turned to their own experiences as a ground for theorizing their multiple

forms of oppression, were denied entrance to the feminism field, at least through Jaggar's

(1983) work. Fortunately, the latter did not discourage feminists of color and lesbian

feminists; to the contrary, it instigated a period of "talking back," (hook, 1989) legitimizing

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[2] I used Sánchez's (1987) definition of pragmatism, which is to reject the old forms of legitimizing reason to defend a consensus-view of truth, one determined by the dominant bourgeois discourses, one that ensures the maintenance of the status quo" (p. 4-5). The questions of meaning, reality, and truth are inextricably linked in pragmatic thinking and it is these subjects' boundaries that postmodernitists and poststructuralists continue to push.

their knowledge, and demanding their space in the feminism terrain.

With a critical lens, the infuriated marginalized voices of lesbians and feminists of color influenced by critical theory began to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s. This movement and emergence of scholarship was considered the third wave, which channeled their frustration as a contestation to reductionist feminists' ideologies of the second wave. Feminists who faced head-on the profound racism and sexism of the second wave included Barbara Smith (1982), Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1983), Gloria Anzaldúa (1989), Judith Butler (1990), and many more. Frances Beale (1971), a black feminist who in her book titled *"Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female"* presented a strong determination to name the second wave of U.S. feminism as a "white women's movement" that insisted on organizing along the binary gender division without taking in to consideration other factors such as race, sex, and class. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) described the Socialist, Radical, and Liberal arms as "imperial feminism" for their race blindness.

Juxtaposed to Smith, Sandoval (2000) influenced by Gramsci, described first-and second-wave as "hegemonic feminisms" and sought the inclusion and validation of Chicanas' pragmatic work. Chicana feminists eloquently articulated that Western theories—whose language and frame of reference are increasingly obscure and filtered through patriarchal norms—limiting women's attempts at liberation from oppression as they suffocate the revolutionary potential of feminist theory (Hernandez & Rehman, 2002). Chicana feminists also believe that Liberal, Radical, and Socialist feminism *have* run parallel to the hegemonic male discourse of phallogocentrism[3] rather than subverting its power (Sandoval, 2000). Thus,

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[3] Coined by Jacques Derrida, phallogocentrism or phallocentrism is a neologism to refer to the privileging of the masculine (phallus) in the construction of meaning.

these western theories failed to offer discursive spaces in which women of color were able to resist their subject positioning, as well as produce a resistance discourse (Weedon, 1997). To summarize these arguments, Chicana feminists view Liberal, Radical, and Socialist feminist as hegemonic discourses incapable of eradicating oppression.

For these particular reasons, Audre Lorde (1981), a black feminist, urged feminists to begin thinking about an alternative counter hegemonic way of conceptualizing and constructing new meaning and knowledge through writing counter narratives because, according to Lorde, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Thus, she urged scholars to create new counter narratives based on a pragmatic philosophy, which centralizes subjects' grounded experiences to produce new ways of writing. These new ways of writing may be utilized to counter-hegemonic ideologies. Lorde (1981) believed that this form of writing would be salient in the effort to overcome human oppression as it dismantled the master's house while at the same time recovering epistemics and creating "new knowledge."

Contemporarily, Chicana feminist epistemologies have focused on disrupting dichotomies, including concepts such as sex/gender, men/women, work/home, and illuminate everything that exists in between to embrace differences and centralize life's experiences (Lorde, 1981; Sandoval, 1998). Chicana epistemologies also recognized and embraced the differences, contradictions, and ambivalence of everyday life experiences with the premise of aspiring to ameliorate some of the divisiveness which marred first-and second-wave feminism by aiming to bring together women from disparate social and cultural positions (Sandoval, 2000). Chicana feminists went further to also challenge racialized categories by arguing that identities were fluid, fragmented, and discursively constructed (Perez, 1999; Sandoval, 2000).

Linkage between Chicana Feminist Epistemologies and

Latina Critical Theory within the Education field

Critical literature has greatly influenced the works of third-wave feminists, especially Chicana feminists. It is obvious that Chicana feminist epistemologies "theorize critical literacy as feminist affirmations and intersections through tenets of intersectionality, agency, and family" (Knight et al., 2006, p. 41). The influence has been clear especially in the contemporary Chicana feminist literature, which has made it possible for the conceptualization of existing intersections of subordination and power relations. Thus, Chicana feminist epistemologies concurred with several tenets of LatCrit and where one may lack analytical rigor, the other usually compensates. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of Chicana feminist epistemologies and LatCrit concepts in education, which form part of my theoretical framework and inform the analysis and arguments put forth in this study.

Chicana Feminist Epistemologies in Education

Chicana feminism, like LatCrit, has not yet been adapted as widely as CRT in the educational field, especially for its pragmatic epistemologies and lack of normative judgments. As stated above, Chicana feminists' works focus on disruption of phallogocentrism and hegemonic feminism by written pragmatism narratives and producing an eruption of' the personal voice into the narrative (Alarcon, 1988; Castaneda, 1993; Castillo, 1995; Cordova, 1997; Saldivar-Hull, 2000; Trujillo, 1998; Ruiz, 1998). Chicana feminist epistemologies promote the social and political progressive change not only in academia, but in society as a whole.

Although I find it problematic to reduce and condense Chicana feminist epistemologies to a few tenets that create boundaries with restrictive definitions, which ultimately exclude others and make Chicana feminism an object of study that is stagnant, for the purpose of this study, I will describe and use six concepts. These concepts of Chicana feminism include: (a) meaning and knowledge are socially constructed and constituted within language, hence subjectivity is constituted by discourse, thus urge *La Mestiza* to enter the discourse and create knowledge (b) disruption of the Western hegemonic epistemologies, (c) intersectionality gender, sexuality and religious ideologies that constitute a Chicana body, (d) the commitment to social and political transformation utilizing *La Mestiza' facultad*, oppositional agency, and hybrid identities, (e) the centrality of struggle and experiences to the formation of their political consciousness, and last but not least, (f) the hybrid identities *which encompass mestizaje, Mestiza consciousness* and *borderlands lens.*

Regarding the first concept of (a) meaning and knowledge, Chicana feminists have criticized the phallogocentric definitions of Western hegemonic epistemologies that are intertwined in the academy's language, and urged other feminists to construct new knowledge, new meanings, and even new language (Anzaldúa, 1989). The persistence of disrupting the normative entanglements that continue oppressing Chicanas/Latinas has been the major focus of Chicanas' work and scholarship. Although there have been struggles of legitimizing their work due to their pragmatic ideas and concepts that have clashed with those in power (e.g., Cordova, 1998), Chicana feminism has continued to construct language, meaning, and knowledge with the intention of creating new counter discourse to eradicate oppression (Anzaldúa,1989). Moreover, the language and culture are inseparable to Anzaldúa as she shouted, "If you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin

skin to linguistic identity. Until I take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (p. 81). Thus, she utilized codeswitching, as a desirable new language and as a method to disrupt oppression, hence utilizing Castellaño Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Tex-Mex, Calo/Pachuco and Nahuatl art in her writing to make her point. Anzaldúa (1989) admitted to codeswitching to make the reader uncomfortable; to make the reader feel how she did when she came to the United States as a non-English speaker who battled the subordination of her native language (see also Adams, 1995; Crawford, 2000; Guerra, 2004).

Codeswitching has a clement of power and definitely (b) disrupting Western epistemologies which is the second major concept in Chicana feminism. These feminists of color continue writing "in opposition to a hegemonic feminist discourse...in opposition to academics...who have never fully recognized them as subjects, [and] as active agents" (Cordova, 1994, p. 194) and advocates for the construction of new tools to dismantle the oppression of marginalized groups. For instance, Emma Perez (1999), a Chicana feminist, has calls on scholars, particularly Chicana historians, to disrupt historical phallogocentric hegemonic discursive practices in order to move beyond writing histories that respond to, and consequently are bounded by, traditional and Western categories of historiography. Perez urges other Chicana scholars to create new ways of writing Chicana stories because by creating "new ways of knowing" it will bring us (and I am including myself) to new ways of conceiving history, as "decolonial imaginary," where we are able to imagine our own future and in our own terms with ourselves as subjects (Perez, 1999).

Like LatCrit, Chicana feminist scholars believe that it is imperative to conceptualize Chicanas'/Latinas' oppression as a set of (c) intersected multiple subordinations. Chicana feminists eloquently state that in order to do justice to the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas, it is

salient to critically analyze the intersections of class, race, gender and sexuality. Chicana

feminist also criticized institutionalized religious ideologies for restricting the Chicana role as

women in the church and in community (Anzaldúa, 1987; Garcia, 1989, NietoGomez, 1997;

Vidal, 1997). This intersectionality is expanded with the assistance of LatCrit to include

nationality, language, and legal status. Furthermore, Chicana feminists also concurred with

LatCrit on (d) the commitment to social and political transformation but Chicana feminists

privilege the Chicana experiences and empower them to be creators of knowledge. Anzaldúa

explains:

> Theory, then, is a set of knowledges [sic]. Some of these knowledges [sic] have
>
> been kept from us-entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because
>
> we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and
>
> excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory
>
> for us, it is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow white men
>
> and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and
>
> methodologies, we transform that theorizing space. (p.118)

In the last sentence of her quote, Anzaldúa is inviting other scholars to create their own

approach and accept Latinas/Chicanas as creators of knowledge. Moreover, Chicana feminists

(e) centralize the struggle and experiences so that collectively they can form their political

consciousness. The major concept of Chicana feminist literature is found within the (f)

borderland epistemological metaphors which I am compelled to elaborate on due to their

preeminence in the experiences of Chicana/Latina participants in this study.

Borderland Epistemologies, *Mestizaje* and Hybrid Identity

Gloria Anzaldúa, in the preface to the first edition of her seminal work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza,* defined the borderland or *la frontera* as follows:

> The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different race occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (p. 187)

Borderland, therefore, represents more than the area surrounding the physical dividing line between two nation-states. *La frontera* is both a physical location and a metaphorical medium for ideas and concepts that flow back and forth across this sometimes insurmountable, sometimes unnoticeable divide. It represents the juxtaposition, interaction, and melding of cultures, social classes, sexes, and race. Ernst-Slavit (2002) offered a definition of borderlands that is similar to Anzaldúa's: "Borderlands are those unintentional, multicultural spaces where cultures meet, where those living on the edges discover similar shared beliefs and rituals and are able to construct new ones" (p. 251).

Although differing in their exact terminology, other scholars have also embraced the borderland concept. For example, George (1993) made reference to "cultural fusion," Berman (1982) described borderlands as exemplifying a "unity of disunity." Renato Rosaldo (1993) has written of "border crossers" as a reference to those who exist within the indeterminate physical, social, and cultural space of the borderlands.

In other words, borderland is the place where border cultures are produced, where border

identities are constructed and invented and that are "neither singular nor static." *La frontera* underscores the displacement and shifts of identities pertinent to the lives of the Latina participants. These hybrid identities are mostly *frontera* dwellers who feel "never quite at home" because of their own unawareness of their ability to dwell in the "in between spaces" (Anzaldúa, 1987). It is this life in the margins, on the border, in the "third space" between cultures that frames my study within these Chicana theories, which manifest themselves as metaphorical concepts complimenting LatCrit.

In this physical and metaphorical space, the "sign and referent are pulled apart for inspection" (p. 5) as one recognized a bounded and knowable identity; but this "bounded" identity continues to move, and so is fluid and ever-changing. The juxtaposition of stasis and action allow meanings and definitions to become constituted by their movement, negotiation, and renegotiation between the borders to Mexico and the United States.

Hence, the "fixed" categories that compose identity are recognized as shifting, unstable, and constantly in flux. These fluid identity categories are ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality where the border was physically and metaphorically central. Anzaldúa, a lesbian from an ethnic and linguistic minority, saw herself as a member of multiple oppressed groups. Thus, she constructed a self in a fragmented and disjunctive unit. Additionally, she argued that her ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality were not individual units, but were intersecting components, a theme common to the broader category of postcolonial writing. Anzaldúa vigorously defended the polyvocality and syncretic multi-ethnicity in her writing by not inhabiting one category completely. This is a key component of an ambiguous, hybrid *mestizaje* identity, typical of *la frontera*.

Thus, Anzaldúa's *mestizaje* identity was characterized by a flexibility of "both/and"

instead of "either/or." Faced with the choice between Mexican or "American" ethnicity, English or Spanish language, and feminine or masculine sexuality, Anzaldúa felt as if she were "floundering in uncharted seas" (1987, p. 79). She felt *un choque,* or culture shock, when two incompatible frames of reference such as "Roman Catholic" and "lesbian" came crashing together. In response, to claim an identity that allowed for the crossbreeding of concepts, she learned to juggle cultures, reject nothing, sustain contradictions, and develop a tolerance for ambiguity; *mestizaje* (ibid.).

In *la frontera, mestizaje* is a refusal of a half and half identity as well as a refusal of Otherness. *Mestizaje* can exist in the discursive third-space (Anzaldúa, 1987) between the binaries of rural and urban, Mexican and "American," English and Spanish, and feminine and masculine (Tagg & Sanchez-Tranquilino, 1992; Anzaldúa, 1987). Anzaldúa felt tension from attempting to reconcile her multiple identities as a woman in a patriarchical world, and U.S citizen of Mexican heritage, a Standard English speaker with knowledge of caló[4] slang, and a Roman Catholic lesbian.

Anzaldúa (1987) claimed, "I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. A *veces no soy nada, ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy"* {sometimes I am no one, and nothing. But even when I am not, I am} (p. 63). Outside the Chicana feminist literature this hybrid identity conflicts and the concept of *mestizaje* is prevalent at least at a glimpse.

Other key concepts are descriptions of cultural characteristics, gender roles (e.g., *machismo),* interpersonal and communication styles (e.g., *confianza,),* family dynamics (e.g., *la familia, respeto, concejos),* religion (e.g., Catholicism), which are present in the life of

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[4] Caló (also known as Pachuco) is an argot or slang of Mexican Spanish which originated during the first half of the 20th century in the Southwestern United States. It is a product of zoot suit or Pachuco culture.

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Latinas in the Pacific Northwest.

In short, *la frontera* reveals that a subject's identity does not have to "fit" into standard, hegemonic, and dichotomous categories. *La frontera* deconstructs the dichotomy of "either/or" while granting space for a new *Mestiza* of identities. One can create her own categories, move between borders, create hybrid identities, and exist in the in-between spaces that defy dichotomy.

In summary, carrying out educational research through a CRT/LatCrit and Chicana feminism lens is salient to acquire an understanding of the *modus operandi* of negative discourses. This *modus operandi* includes the organization, production, and distribution of such perceptions and stereotypes, which result in the normalizing of subtle and not-so-subtle discrimination. Below, I will provide an overview of Latina/o critical theory in education and provide its tenets. I will conclude by juxtaposing LatCrit's tenets and Chicana epistemologies to better conceptualize my theoretical framework.

LatCrit Tenets and its Impact in Education

LatCrit, which builds on the five tenets of CRT, while adding perspectives unique to the Chicana/Latina experience in the United States, has been defined as "the emerging field of legal scholarship that examines critically the social and legal positioning of Latinas within the United States" (Valdez, 1998, p. 3; see also Auerbach, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Fernandez, 2002; Gomez, 1998; Gonzalez, 1998; Gutierrez, 2000; Hidalgo, 1998; Rolon-Dow, 2005; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Valdes, 1998b; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Yosso, 2002). Thus, LatCrit has not yet been adapted as widely as CRT in the educational field, but this theory offers epistemological, methodological, and theoretical contributions to educational

research.

In the late 1980s, a few LatCrit theorists had started conducting research in the field of education as pilot studies. Later, this LatCrit proved to be an effective and satisfactory theoretical framework to examine the education system by offering a deeper understanding of the *epistemic modus operandi* that works as mechanics of oppression. The lens of LatCrit guides the investigation into Latinas/os diversities and their subsequent insubordination in the U. S. school system (Aleman, 2004; Barnes, 1990; Bell, 1992, 1995; Calmore, 1992; Crenshaw et al, 1995; Delgado, 1989, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Espinoza, 1990; Esquivel, 2003; Fernandez, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lawson, 1995; Lynn, 1999; Matsuda, 1989; Montoya, 1994; Olivas, 1990; Olivos, 2003; Ortiz, 2004; Masko, 2003; Parker et al, 1999; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso,2001; Tate, 1994, 1997; Villalpando, 2004; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Williams, 1991).

Racism is not only a reflection of historical slavery and/or Jim Crow laws and gerrymandering practices of voting districts in the South. It also includes unjust immigration laws and internment camps; it is stolen land grants and silenced languages; it is standardized tests based on standardized culture; it is invisibility and lost identity. LatCrit theory does not only understand racism as a black and white issue, but embraces the different races including individuals from Asia, Caribbean black and American Indians among others. In order to conceptualize this theory is necessary to explore at its tenets in detail.

The four tenets of LatCrit includes—(a) the emphasis in the production of knowledge that constrain individuals, (b) the quest of social transformation, (c) the illumination of subordinations that connect struggles and the actions of eradicating such oppression, and (d) the cultivation of community and coalition (Valdes, 1996). LatCrit has continued to work to

cultivate coalitions with communities by privileging the experiential knowledge of peoples of color, and naming intersections of multiple forms of oppression and seeking for progressive transformation of the oppressed.

These tenets explicitly draw critical attention not only to operations of power, but also to strategies of resistance and thereby implicitly invite LatCritical analysis to explore how the two-power and resistance converge in the messy and multifaceted processes of building communities on any human scale (Valdes, 1996). Such critical analysis of resistance is crucial to the current study as I explore the struggles, challenges, and the resistance of Latinas to the dominant discourses presented in their everyday lives. One of the hallmarks of LatCrit is its ability to embrace and advance their longstanding commitment to community-building by connecting theory with praxis. Its continuous efforts to cultivate coalition with communities will facilitate the process of political activism in my research.

Thus, epistemologically, LatCrit privileges the experiential knowledge of people of color with critical ways of knowing.

LatCrit and Chicana Feminist Epistemologies as a

Theoretical Framework

The LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemology theoretical framework can be perceived or understood as a meta-theoretical concept drawn from several philosophical perspectives of critical theory including critical race theory, Latina/o critical theory and Chicana feminist epistemologies. In the table below I aligned the CRT and LatCrit and concepts of Chicana feminist epistemologies with the purpose of providing a conceptual map.

Table 1: Tenets and Concepts of the Theoretical Framework

Tenets of CRT & LatCrit	Concepts of Chicana Feminist epistemology
(a) The focus on hegemonic knowledge and its production which constrain individuals of color. The centrality of experiential knowledge and production of knowledge that constrain individuals.	(a) The believe that knowledge is socially constructed, presenting *La Mestiza* as the creator of her own valet knowledge.
(b) The challenge of hegemonic ideology.	(b) Disrupting and resisting the Western hegemonic epistemologies.
(c) The centrality and intersectionality of race, class, gender, language and nationality.	(c) Emphasizing the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, and religious ideologies constraining a Chicana body.
(d) The quest for social and political transformation.	(d) The commitment to this quest by utilizing, *facultad,* oppositional agency, and hybrid identities.
(e) The interdisciplinary perspectives: Storytelling, Counter stories, Narratives, Cuentos.	(e) The centrality of Chicana struggles and experiences to the formation of political consciousness for community awareness.
(f) The expansion and connection of struggle(s), and the cultivation of community and coalition.	(f) The *Mestiza* subjectivity including cross-borders experiences, hybrid identity and her *Mestiza* consciousness.

While LatCrit deconstructs college Chicana/Latina students' life experiences to critically examine structural and asymmetrical relations of power that dominate, control and maintain a social system in which Chicanas/Latinas continue holding subordinated positions, Chicana feminist epistemology allows to make connections, acknowledge contradictions, overcome idealistic assumptions, and reject reductionist ideologies. As LatCrit unveils the hegemonic narratives entrenched in the structural systems of society, Chicana feminist epistemology excavates deeper to discover the oppositional agency, tactics of resistance, hybrid identities, and the *facultad* of Chicana/Latina college students. Focusing on the latter, the Chicana feminist epistemology illustrates the Chicana/Latina college students' *Mestiza* consciousness. Although, chapter four uses LatCrit to uncover the structural systems of oppression while chapter five use Chicana feminist epistemology to bring to the forefront the *Mestiza* consciousness of the students, in several occasions these two philosophical lens are utilized simultaneously to hyper-amplified the experiences of these students.

LatCrit with Chicana feminist epistemology as a theoretical framework has recognized

that dominant knowledge has been constructed and reorganized into racial stratification and class hierarchies by a patriarchal society with the purpose of acquiring power over others as this knowledge becomes normalized and legitimized. It has also encouraged disrupting this knowledge by utilizing the storytelling method to bring to the forefront marginalized voices of society. These practices have been normalized, thus continually evading scrutiny of individuals for devaluing one's ideology over another, or a particular culture over others. However, Chicana feminists' epistemologies and LatCrit focuses on facilitating a critical analysis of such discourse. As I mention above, the combinations of these two theoretical perspectives are crucial since they are complementary and where one may lack analytical rigor, the other usually compensates. LatCrit theorists begin examining hegemonic ideologies and knowledge that constrain or limit the opportunities of marginalized individuals while Chicana epistemologies deconstruct such knowledge by penetrating their critical lens into the roots of the creation of knowledge, also disrupting the phallogocentric and racialized discourses.

 Chicana feminism and LatCrit are properly suited for this study since this framework focuses on the liberation of humans' oppression as they centralize *mestizaje* and hybrid subjectivities, hence focusing on the critical consciousness of the community. LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies elucidate Latinas' multidimensional identities and address the hybrid subjectivity of Latinas' struggles.

Finally, CRT/LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies bring a strong *Mestiza* gendered analysis that will address the Latinas' life struggles and negotiations of their identities. The driving force of this theoretical framework created by CRT/LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies is to explore and join the chorus of participants' voices as they seek to make "meaning" of social problems with the intend of transforming and creating

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societal change. Each of these philosophical perspectives holds central the importance of social and political progressive changes in education. This LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies theoretical framework allows the researcher to utilize a lens that derives from similar historical, social, political, and cultural perspectives of Chicanas in order to conceptualize Chicanas'/Latinas' positionality and create a space where marginalized voices can be heard. Moreover, these two theoretical areas rely heavily on the importance of knowledge gained through the experiences of participants by utilizing narratives, counter-stories, testimonials, and oral histories. More importantly, this theoretical framework moves from the production of knowledge to its transformation in order to provoke and engage in social change. LatCrit, while adhering to the central tenets of critical race theory and praxis, attempts to engage in the transformation of knowledge, hence linking theory and praxis, for immediate social change (Valdes, 1996; Anzaldúa, 1989) by utilizing a bottom up approach of storytelling methodology and centralizing marginalized experiences.

The theoretical framework of CRT/LatCrit and Chicana feminism will facilitate the linkage of theory and practice, hence allowing me to further understand Latina college students' resistance and struggles against the dominant discourses. Therefore, l believe that CRT/LatCrit and Chicana feminism will be sufficient to critically analyze, conceptualize, and illustrate the lives of first generation Chicana/Latina college students of the Pacific Northwest, as well as to raise awareness for progressive political and social change.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Chapter one has provided a preliminary contextual overview of the purpose of this study and has introduced the preliminary research questions posed in this study. Chapter two has provided a review of the theoretical underpinnings that have influenced my own epistemology as a researcher. The goal of this chapter is to show the process by which the "world" of the participants in this study became visible. It will explain the methods used as well as issues/dilemmas, struggles, and challenges I faced during the data gathering process. This chapter will also address the research methodology and design, the process of the data collection, and how the data was analyzed.

From Traditional Methods to Storytelling

Historically, it has been the lives of those in power which have been examined, spoken about, documented, and reproduced (Collins, 1990, 1999; Delgado Bernal, 1998). This traditionally Western approach is criticized by theoretical framework encompassed by critical race theory (CRT), Latina/o critical theory (LatCrit) and Chicana feminist epistemology and proposes that investigators would have much to gain by starting from the lives of people in oppressed groups. The traditional top-down, rigid Western methods of research are insufficient to illuminate not only the complexity of the intersectional subordination and discrimination within the life experiences of Chicanas, but also to learn from their negotiations, challenges, persistence, and endurance.

Therefore, the design of this project was modeled on the framework of LatCrit theory (Anzaldúa, 1999; Bell, 1987, 1992, 1995; Carrasco, 1996; hooks, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Olivas, 1990; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano &Yosso, 2000; Trueba, 1991; Trueba & McLaren, 2000; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999), which provided a road map devising a research strategy with questions that allowed me to explore the lives of the participants of this study. This research was constructed around the understandings of oppression, liberation, and composed of mutual exchanges between the student-participants and myself.

My research design exhibits participants' storytelling, which assists in emphasizing the importance of validating and legitimizing the perspectives of marginalized groups (Delgado, 1993). Moreover, I am committed to an intersectional approach that considers Latinas as primary agents of knowledge. Understanding how Latinas make meaning of their life experiences and how they construct their identities will provide a perspective which is missing within Chicanas/os and Latinas/os identity literature. While I understand that the experiences of Latinas in my study are not homogeneous, my focus is to fill the gap in the literature and theorize the experiences of the participants of this study. The latter was done by gathering data through individual in-depth interviews as a means of inquiry.

Research Methodology and Design

The best technique to develop an appropriate method that centers the voices of the participants is through a qualitative approach. According to Wolcott (2001), "qualitative inquiry is more than method, and method is more than fieldwork techniques" (p. 93), it "involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that "qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material

practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings to attempt to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, in order to theorize about the experiences of Chicana/Latina college students, the methodological framework or the set of interpretive materials that makes the world visible ought to emerge from the *bottom-up* approach. Utilizing a bottom up approach in a qualitative inquiry, this study centralizes the experiential knowledge or the "ways of knowing" of these Chicana/Latina college participants. Moreover, this approach facilitates an analysis of Chicana/Latina life experiences within the socioeconomic and political contexts in which they function. Thus, narratives and storytelling, a qualitative and important research method for CRT/LatCrit and Chicana feminist scholars, is essential in assessing the struggles and negotiations of Chicanas/Latinas.

Narratives and Storytelling

Narratives and storytelling provide readers with an account that vividly challenges preconceived notions of race, gender, class, and other identities. Moreover, the rich descriptions provided in these interviews serve to illuminate and document institutional as well as overt racism (Parker, 2003). The legitimatization of stories about prejudice and discrimination from the perspective of people of color is necessary, because only through carefully listening can the propensity to see the world through a colonized lens be accomplished. Through carefully listening to the stories of others, "one can acquire the ability to see the world through other's eyes" (Delgado, 1989, p. 397) and understand where they are coming from.

Moreover, the premise of CRT, LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemology is that Chicana/Latina voices are centralized to break the silence for the purpose of social

empowerment. Trujillo (1998) addresses the importance of voice when referring to groups that have been historically oppressed. She claims that voice is a concept vital to self-empowerment and emancipation, an expression of an impetus for healthy identities and an expression of strong culture. Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) also articulate the importance of giving voice to the reality of subordinated individuals. The collective voice that emerges interrupts the power of the dominant group as it opens the opportunity to name the realities of marginalized individuals. This collective voice in turn helps transform and neutralize ideologies that produce and reproduce relationships of domination and subordination.

The voices of marginalized and subordinated individuals are found in storytelling and narratives; although, for centuries repressed by the dominant western ideologies, these methods have served an important pedagogical and methodological function. Historically, storytelling has been how people of color have passed on knowledge and history in an effort to maintain their values and beliefs, and resist dominant ideologies and acculturation (Smith, 1999). Thus, my theoretical framework honors the experiential knowledge of people of color and describes their knowledge as "critical ways of knowing." These "critical ways of knowing" emerge from the deconstruction of their storytelling, and are key elements, and important tools for achieving *human emancipation* (Delgado, 1995; Horkheimer, 1982).

CRT, LatCrit and Chicana feminist scholars have incorporated a long and rich tradition of storytelling, providing perspectives and viewpoints of people of color for the purpose of persuading, analyzing, and teaching about oppression and inequality. These forms of stories have been a tool to effectively articulate and voice the long-silenced and marginalized experiences of Chicanas (Anzaldúa, 1989; Sánchez 1987; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Sandoval, 2000). This theoretical framework perceives these oral histories and storytelling as an

appropriate methodology to analyze the educational experiences of Chicana/Latina college students (Anzaldúa, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a, 2001b; Villenas, 1996). Furthermore, by utilizing storytelling and placing the life experiences of Chicana/Latina college students at the center of the analysis, I am not only centralizing their "critical ways of knowing," but I am also illuminating and revealing the different forms of resistance used by my participants to cope with or challenge their oppressive situations.

Additionally, storytelling creates a space for Latinas to share their own "critical ways of knowing," thus stimulating critical understanding of their own lived experiences. Moreover, storytelling empowers participants by its extraordinary ability to affect personal growth, build community and family relations, and bring strength into the lives of participants as they discover their individual voices. Thus, storytelling by Chicana/Latina college students will be the primary tool to analyze their own personal experiences, which is central to my study.

Rejecting objectivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument used to accomplish the collection and analysis of the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985):

…only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that different interaction; because the intrusion of instruments intervenes in the mutual shaping of other elements and that shaping can be appreciated and evaluated only by a human; and because all instruments are value-based and interact with local values but only the human is in a position to identify and take into account (to some extent) those resulting biases. (pp. 39-40)

Nevertheless, critics of qualitative research studies often question the credibility, objectivity, and truthfulness of such stories and claim they may have a political agenda. Questions of objectivity, however, are irrelevant since this research is subjective in nature and my subjectivity (as a researcher) is visible throughout this research endeavor. Rather than fear the subjectivity and bias of the human instrument, qualitative researchers believe that objectivity, in a scientific sense, does not exist. As Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) asserted:

> The realization that objectivity in research is an illusion frees the naturalistic
>
> researcher to do truly effective data collection and analysis. Most important is the
>
> fact that the researcher him- or herself becomes the most significant instrument
>
> for data collection and analysis. (p. 39)

Consequently, these authors describe that the process of collecting and analyzing data is "interactive" much in the same way that "humans solve their daily problems" (p. 39). To further address the issue of subjectivity, I want to borrow from the work of Daphne Patai (1988), a poststructuralist feminist who acknowledges the crucial interaction with her subjects and the inability to be fully objective while conducting her interviews. She eloquently articulated that the interview is "a point of intersection of two subjectivities—theirs and mine, their cultural assumptions and mine, their memories and my questions, their sense of self and my own, their hesitations and my encouraging words or gestures (or sometimes vice versa), and much, much more" (cited in Bettie, 2003, p. 22). Accordingly, given the nature of my study—a collective work about the life experiences of Latinas—I do not claim objectivity.

However, it must be noted that because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and analysis, "[a]ll observation and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective" (Merriam, 1998, p. 22). Therefore, given the nature of this qualitative

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study, it is important that the readers understand my biases as a researcher. I must hold myself

accountable for any research assumptions inherent in my personal identity.

Positionality: Dancing With Hybrid Identities

My own stories mirror the stories of the participants. Their experiences are the

interwoven account of how I, too, negotiate my roles as a Chicana, an activist, an educator, an

ally, a mentor, an antiracist-antisexist, and as a native "marginalized" researcher (Villenas,

1996). Like most of my Chicana/Latina participants, I have experienced the hardships,

repression, and subordination that marginalized groups in this society are subjected to.

Consequently, unable to separate the perspectives I bring into this study as a Chicana, an activist,

and a scholar, I will be transparent and concise regarding the way I view the world.

My epistemology has been constructed and shaped in part by the dominant discourses

that are rooted in my life experiences and many socially-enforced positions that constrain and

entrap my body, such as the social constructive norms imposed on me by a Western male-

dominated society. Our bodies are constituted by other socially-constructed norms that emerge

from being female with Mexican traditional cultural influences and heritage. For instance, as a

Latina, I am subject to being seen through the dominant patriarchal lens as a passive, submissive,

silent, obedient, procreating housekeeper. These labels are derived from the notion that every

Latina embodies these stereotypes in which this patriarchal, phallogocentric, and Eurocentric

society has been constructed. The list, however, does not stop there.

For example, in the U.S., I am also a hyphenated Mexican-American, a *Mestiza*/Chicana

in terms of my race, Latina in regards to my Spanish-speaking heritage, and an immigrant who

settles in the North for a "better life" in terms of my ancestors' history, but always implicitly

labeled as the *Other*. In Mexico, I am a *Pocha*, a term used by Mexicans to identify a pariah,

outcast, and/or the *Other* who is U.S. born and not authentic enough to be Mexican, a *gringolized*

Mexican.

Additionally, in academia, which continues to be restricted and controlled by dominant

Western ideologies, but that hesitates to label bodies (at least in some institutions and/or

departments), I am constituted as a graduate student of color, perhaps one of a color number to

meet a diversity quota. I am all of these things, at the same time, I am none of these things. I

perform each and every single identity, sometimes simultaneously, yet these identities

individually do not describe me entirely. Therefore, I claim my positionality as a Chicana with

hybrid identities shaping my subjectivity every second as I reside at the crossroads of

race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, class, nationality, language, religion, and many other nexus.

It is these crossroads, these borderlands and nexus that oppressed my body. Being caught

between these hegemonic dominant discourses prompted me to embark on this journey. Thus, I

attempt to not only depict obstructions and subordinations, but ultimately to create crossroads,

hybrid identities, and to raise critical consciousness among Latinas and Latinos and academic

communities alike. My work aims to penetrate borders by making accessible the stories and life

experiences of Chicana/Latina college students, hence projecting their own *voices* that would

otherwise be restrained and out of reach.

Dilemmas of Representation

Evidently, the increasing number of ethical, cultural, political, and personal struggles that

emerge while working within and writing about my own people and my own community is

inevitable. Villenas (1996) adeptly describes the particularities of the native researcher as

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involving the internal dilemmas of *colonizer/colonized* and as *insider/outsider*. She expressed

the following difficulties as she conducted data collection in her own community:

> As a Chicana graduate student in a White institution and an education
>
> ethnographer of Latino communities, I am both, as well as in between the two. I
>
> am the colonized in relation to the greater society, to the institution of higher
>
> learning, and to the dominant majority culture in the research setting. I am the
>
> colonizer because I am the educated, "marginalized" researcher, recruited and
>
> sanctioned by privileged dominant institutions to write for and about Latino
>
> communities. I am a walking contradiction with a foot in both worlds—in the
>
> dominant privileged institutions and in the marginalized communities. (p. 714)

These words describe well the contradictions and dilemmas that I faced during this study.

These dilemmas emerged when conducting my interviews and I recognized that I was being

implicated in the imperialist agenda (Rosaldo, 1989) embedded in the research method being

utilized for this study. For instance, as a "native" and marginalized (Villenas, 1996) researcher,

blessed by the privileged dominant academic institution to explore and deconstruct the life

experiences of Latinas, I am a "colonizer" according to Villenas (1996).

However, my experience as a researcher did not feel like that of a colonizer, but as a

Malinche, a native Indian from the center of Mexico who became the mistress of Hernán Cortés.

According to critics, she served as a translator for the *conquistadores*. Narratives of the

Conquest blamed *Malinche* and her gift for languages for the defeat of the Aztecs. She is

portrayed as the bridge through which the colonizers were able to gain the trust of the Aztec

community with the purpose of conquering them.

Similarly, in this study, I became the *Malinche,* the traitor who critically illuminated the inequalities and oppressive discourses not only in the dominant U.S. society, but also entrenched in my own Chicano/Mexican culture. I feel like a traitor for exposing my community to scrutiny by those in academia and, like the *Malinche*, this study became my survival and the Latina voices my bargaining power in academia. Therefore, my main concerns are the implications resulting from my study, including the biased interpretations and negative criticism of my participants' stories from those whose colonized lenses are not adjusted to illuminate the hegemonic practices of this nation.

During the process of gathering the data, I also realized how colonized and marginalized I have become. Similar to my participants, I crossed the border during my teen years; I experienced the discrimination in schools and workplace, I passively accepted the process of deculturation and the disposal of my language. I identified and related to each of my participants as they shared their own stories. Their stories are my stories, their struggles are my struggles, and their challenges my challenges. In some instances, these similarities made us laugh— normally the laugh was an attempt to obliterate the rising lump in our throats and tears in our eyes, but other times we were unable to stop the tears from rolling down our cheeks.

Yet, my participants willingly and gladly continued to open their wounds for me. The latter, on several occasions, made me feel like an intruder. I have questioned my infringement into their lives in the name of research, the purpose of this study and the worthiness of it. Questions such as, *what right do I have to insert my fingers into their wounds and measure the profundity of such? Did I have the right to strip their bodies, mind, and souls, and deconstruct their experiences with the purpose of bringing them to the attention of individuals who continue seeing the world through the lens of Western patriarchal supremacy?* These questions made me

problematize my study and compelled me to reject the imperialistic discourses embedded in the traditional research that continues to create grand narratives, exoticize Latina stories, and push them to the periphery.

Similarly, seeing my participants' pain compels me to question the hegemonic methods utilized in the research itself, the thought of having to reveal their wounds to the world for social transformation after being beaten, exploited, and ostracized created a complex dilemma. Solórzano (1998) reaffirmed my experiences as a researcher when she stated, "most of the methods we use…are rooted in… 'racist epistemologies' [so] it is our responsibility to acknowledge these epistemologies and…use them for transformational purposes" (p. 113). It was, however, especially gratifying to know that educational transformation began by participants telling their story, naming their pain, and finding their own voice. They knew that their stories were tools for transforming and countering negative discourses of Latinas. These Latinas were already incredibly gifted and transformative individuals in their communities. Therefore, I searched for a methodology that aligned with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my world and the world of my participants.

Epistemologically, the point of departure for this study is to privilege the knowledge of people of color (see Anderson, 1989; Madison, 2005; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a, 2001b; Thomas, 1993). Ontologically, I believe that the nature of reality is socially constructed. These and several other preconceived assumptions are what I carry with me throughout my research journey. As a subjective researcher in the very process of rejecting the hegemonic and antagonistic normative discourse, I utilized a qualitative methodology to depict the life struggles and resistances of my participants during their high school to college years.

Consequently, I hope that my researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation are apparent at the outset of the study (Merriam, 1998).

Research Question

The primary research question that guides this study is *how do multiple systems of oppression, institutional stereotypes, socially-constructed roles, and negative preconceived notions impact the academic goals and life achievements of Chicana/Latina college students?* In order to understand the different types of oppression my participants encountered, several conversations about their life experiences related to class, racial/ethnicity, and gender oppression had to be addressed. Moreover, the participants were encouraged to discuss oppression based on gender, language, legal status, and nationality they had experienced throughout their life. After analyzing the primary question of my research, I then explored how Chicanas/Latinas negotiate, disrupt, and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression.

My interest is to understand and learn the tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance they employ, and how they employ or apply them in order to overcome these negative preconceived notions or stereotypes. After long discussions about their struggles and oppression, I stimulated conversations of resistance and their own ways of challenging such discrimination or stereotypes. These questions were formulated with the intention of shedding some light on several strategies and critical ways of knowing to challenge current systems of oppression. Finally, I explored how they accomplish and/or develop a positive sense of self-identity in order to overcome their obstacles.

My interview protocol was not intended to constrain or frame the participants' conversations or responses (see Appendix B). On the contrary, in every interview they were

encouraged to deviate from the question if they felt it was necessary to disclose other issues. Frequently, once the interview had started, questions evolved, and the interview took shape in its own direction, framed only by the initial questions, guided by the topics my interviewees were bringing forward, and by my further probing of these topics. The questions stated in Appendix B were only to facilitate and initiate the conversation with my participants and to provide some guidance for my research.

Data Collection

To minimize the probability of misinterpretations, this study employed multiple data collection techniques. "For qualitative casework, these procedures are generally called triangulation. Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Denzin, 1978; Stake, 2000, p. 443). In keeping with the principles of qualitative research, I have made an effort to enhance the internal validity of the study by using (1) open-ended questions, (2) follow-up interviews, (3) member checking of the data by participants and other faculty members, (4) prolonging engagement in the setting, and (5) peer debriefing (Merriam, 1998, pp. 204-205).

The open-ended questions prevented the researcher from guiding the participants' answers; I made certain to clarify every unclear or complex point during the first interview, the follow-up interview, and while having informal conversations during non-school activities.

The purpose of the first formal interview was threefold: (1) to discuss the first set of questions about their personal, and family background (2) to develop a relationship with the participant, and (3) to build a basis for deeper understanding of their perspective on higher education, explore their struggles and negotiations of identities, listen to their stories, and build a

foundation for further questioning. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to clarify or

seek additional information that might have been omitted from previous interviews.

Once the participants of this study agreed to participate, I scheduled appointments with

each of them in private places, usually my office, where they spoke about their experiences.

Before each interview, Informed Consent forms were collected and signed by each participant

(see Appendix C). I shared my own background at the beginning of each interview for a couple

of important reasons: to reinforce a sense of trust and friendship that allowed each participant to

open up, and to create a "safe space" that was conducive to each participant sharing her life and

academic experiences (Duque, 2004).

The interviews were expected to take 45 minutes, however, due to extensive detail in the

participants' storytelling, the interviews varied from one hour and 45 minutes to four hours.

Over a period of ten months, I developed relationships with all the participants that allowed me

to ask questions beyond the interviews. In the halls, during university celebrations and events, or

even during a Karaoke gathering at my home, I had the opportunity to informally gather pieces

of their stories that went beyond the expectations of my study.

After the interviews were carefully transcribed, with names omitted, following the

triangulation protocol, the interviews were reviewed by some of the participants to confirm

interpretation and by faculty members who were familiar with the theoretical foundation utilized

in this study and had long years of experience working with low income, first generation, and

minority students.

I analyzed the interview and organized my thoughts after each session by writing in my

journal. Nevertheless, after the transcript reviews of the third interview, I noticed the multiple

times I interrupted the participants to ask for clarifications. To correct these actions in the future

interviews, I used facial techniques such as nodding and visual cues to signal for clarification, and only when necessary did I interrupt by asking for clarification.

Listening intently is crucial during storytelling, for what may appear as an unambiguous declaration may be masked amid tropes and metaphors. Metaphoric precision, according to Eisner (1991) "is the central vehicle for revealing the qualitative aspects of life…Nothing is more precise than the artistic use of language" (p. 227). Moreover, Tuhiwai Smith (2002) stated, "the point about these stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply" (p. 144), but the ambiguity surrounding all spoken and non-spoken words, makes complex what may first appear straightforward (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Analyses of storytelling can be challenging and enriching, suggestive of the narrators' multifaceted life experiences. The final product may resemble what Marcus and Fischer (1986) called a "messy text." A postmodern methodology such as storytelling could generate an experimental written product that "break[s] the binary between science and literature" to show how humans "cope with both the eternal verities of human existence and the daily irritation and tragedies of living that existence" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 184).

At this point, I did not know what the product was going to resemble because I could not foresee the students' daily struggles and negotiations, nor did I know how I would react. The possibilities for variation in the final products are "limited only by the number of those engaged in inquiry" (p.185). Nevertheless, the purpose of this study is to record and theorize the perspectives and experiences of these participants, documenting their voices and their visions, their authority, knowledge, and wisdom (O'Brien, 2001). To follow the metaphor of a "portrait artist" as I documented the participants' lives it was like making a rough sketch in graphite pencil. Placing the participants' conversations into a cultural context filled these abstract figures

with light, color, and texture until it formed an actual tangible portrait that one could almost touch and feel. Furthermore, the texture was also influenced and magnified by my own experiences, which were reflecting "back their pain, their fears, and their victories" (Lawrence, 1995, p. 26).

To have a clear understanding of the participants' social and political positionality it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the state of affairs of the Latino population in the United States, particularly with respect to Latinas/Latinos in the Pacific Northwest.

A Glimpse of Latinas/Latinos in the Pacific Northwest

Currently, Latinos constitute the largest minority population group in the nation with an exponential growth every five years. The estimated growth of the Latina/o population as of July 1, 2006 makes this group the nation's largest ethnic/racial minority in the United States (U.S Census Bureau, 2006). Apart from being the largest minority group in the nation, the Latino population is much younger than other racial and ethnic groups. While the African American population of children ages 5 to 13 is projected to increase by 15 percent and the White population by 11 percent, Latinos of the same age are estimated to increase by as much as 47 percent in 2030 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The reality is that by the year 2030, Latinas/os will comprise an estimated 25 percent of the total school population, which amounts to 16 million students (U.S. Census, 2006). This trend, while especially pronounced in California and Texas, is occurring in all major cities and urban public schools throughout the nation and has had an enormous impact on the Pacific Northwest, broadly defined, extends from the ocean to the continental divide and includes all of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

The Latina/o population in the state of Washington, where this study was conducted, has increased approximately 147 percent from 1990 to 2008 and is estimated to increase up to 1 million people by the year 2030. The percentage of minority students has grown from 17.9 percent in 1990 to 25.4 percent in 2001. The highest percentages of Latinos are located in Central Washington, where the core of labor-intensive agricultural industry lies. Similarly, the national poverty rate for Blacks, Latinos, and American Indians is triple that of Whites. Historically, the disparity in poverty rates between Whites and people of color has been even larger. There are more people of color living in poverty than Whites, despite the fact that Whites represent 79 percent of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In the state of Washington, according to estimates by the Employment Security Department and the Department of Labor, nearly all (85 to 90 percent) of agricultural production workers (in non-managerial positions) are of Mexican origin. Noticeably, and undeniably a significant percentage of Latinos reside in cities within Washington State including the Yakima Valley, Pasco, Burien, and Mt. Vernon. In the Yakima Valley alone, from Wapato to Prosser, Latinos make up the majority of the population. Yakima County, as a whole, has approximately 38.6 percent of Latinos living in the state. The presence of *panederías* (bakeries), *taquerías* ("taco truck" restaurants), and Spanish television and radio channels are common or even more common than their English counterparts. This state has many Latinos working on farms, but the highest grossing businesses are owned by Latinos as well.

Current Political Events Affecting Latinos in the State of Washington

In 2006, Washington State witnessed an historic day as more than 15,000 people marched in Seattle for immigrant rights. The majority were Latino residents, both U.S. citizens and

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undocumented. This historic rally was followed by another on May 1 in Yakima and Pasco, which are considered the two "Latinized" cities of Washington State (Alamillo, 2006). I was fortunate to have attended the Pasco rally, where not only Latino students and workers marched, but also lawyers, business owners, and teachers. The marchers responded to legislation in congress that proposed the criminalization of illegal immigrants along with organizations and individuals who aided them in any way, shape, or form, and the fortification of the U.S.-Mexico border. The issues addressed in these marches illustrated the major challenges Latinos are still facing in overcoming oppressive legislative attempts to keep them in the shadows and dispose them when their labor is not need it.

Another hurdle the Latino population is facing is achievement gaps in education. According to the State of Washington Commission on Hispanic Affairs (2006), Latina/o students make up 12 percent of the student body, but have only a 54 percent on-time graduation rate. American Indian and African American students are also experiencing low graduation rates in secondary school, but the struggles of Latina/os in education have only come to the forefront in recent years due to the dramatic increase of the population and the focus on immigration issues. The Latina/o Educational Achievement Project (LEAP) identified the school districts with the largest Latino population in the state as: Sunnyside (85%), Pasco (69.1%), and Yakima (60.9%). LEAP also identified the school districts with the highest percentage of Latina/o student population which are: Mabton (94.8%), Wahluke (91%), and Granger (85.9%).

The College

Having described the demographics of the Latino population residing in the State of Washington, it is safe to expect that the majority of my participants would enroll in a regional

comprehensive public university located in the Pacific Northwest where a high percentage of

first-and second-generation Chicanas/Latinas would attend. For its location and accessibility as

well as its affordability, the institution I chose ranks as one of the top choices for Latinas and

Latinos in the Pacific Northwest to achieve their educational and career objectives. According to

my participants, one reason influencing their decision to attend this university was the Latino

President who serves in the highest administrative post. Also, several Latina and Latinos made

their decision in large part due to the familiarity of the campus from having attended conferences

there while in high school. Another important reason for the participants to attend this institution

included the proximity of the university to their hometowns. This was a crucial factor because it

allowed them to remain connected to their network of support while being distanced enough to

be somewhat shielded from the negative influences of the *barrios*.

Moreover, federal programs such as College Achievement Migrant Program (CAMP),

Student Support Services and the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program, as

well as the Chicano Education program, provided a sense of belonging for Latina and Latino

students and facilitated their transition from high school to college life. These programs allowed

them to create their own community of support that aided them in navigating the bureaucracy of

the higher education system.

Finding Participants for the Study

Working for the McNair Scholars Program, a federally-funded program for first

generation, low-income and/or underrepresented student populations, provided me with the

opportunity to meet several potential participants for my study. Being involved with MEChA

(Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán), a national Chicana and Chicano student activist

group that, since the 1960s, has served as a space for student involvement on campus focusing on community issues impacting Chicanas and Chicanos, also yielded not only a large number of participants, but paved the way for developing trusting relationships that allowed me, as a researcher, to gain the *confianza* (trust) of the participants.

As I began my research, the dilemma of *confianza* and the "native" researcher was amplified not only by my participants' skepticism of social transformation, but also by my own concerns of inexperience as a "native" researcher. This reminded me that the traditional role of the researcher is to explore the "Exotic Other" and bring their analysis to the benefit of the "Elites." Thus, being a Chicana and researching my own community was difficult. My identity offered me a partial insider privileges, but did not guarantee the *confianza* (trust) of my participants. In other words, just because I shared the same ethnic background, language, religious convictions, cultural values and/or because I had experienced similar oppression and alienation, it did not necessarily ensure the acceptance of my study by my participants. They had questions about why we, as Latinas, needed to go the extra mile for *them* to accept *us* for who we are. Why do we need to bend over backwards and beg for respect and approval? And why do we need to be explored as if we are exotic objects?

There were other issues that limited my privilege as a "native" researcher and impacted the trust of my participants. For instance, the fact that I was held an academic coordinator role within the institution, the fact that their stories were so painful to recall, the fact that they may speak against their own traditional norms and customs, and against their own traditional religious ideologies, limited the *confianza* between me and the participants. Given these circumstances, I have to reiterate that the *confianza* bestowed on the researcher is not always guaranteed despite the "nativeness" of the researcher.

Also, speaking *on behalf* of the marginalized—in this case, Chicana/Latina college students—raised complex issues for me as a researcher. Villenas (1996) expanded upon this idea by poignantly addressing the issue of how easily critical scholars of color are co-opted by the dominant society so as to be complicit in their own marginalization and the marginalization of others. Thus, I cannot assume to speak *on behalf of* or *about* the young Chicanas/Latinas in my study as an insider. I can only assume and hope that through their storytelling, I might gain *insight* into the life experiences of Latina college students, their own "critical ways of knowing," and be able to produce a study that is a collection of their stories.

I interviewed five generation1.5 and five second-generation low-income Latina students. In order to obtain such groups, I communicated with programs and organizations about my study, and sent an email to key personnel that have daily contact with Latinas (see Appendix D). As a result of this communication, a snowball sampling effect emerged as potential participants were referred to me by the participants I had already interviewed. This technique was particularly effective when identifying the so-called "1079" students who were uneasy about revealing their legal status to school administrators or other students for fear of being ostracized. The label "1079" comes from an Engrossed Bill passed to lower non-resident tuition for undocumented students who have lived in the State of Washington for more than three years, completed their full senior year of high school and earned a diploma or the equivalent, and have the desire to become permanent residents or citizens of the United States. Without these referrals and word-of-month, I would have had tremendous difficulties finding 1079 students on the university campus.

For the purpose of this study, I will utilize the term generation 1.5 or one-and-a-half generation to refer to these 1079 Chicana/Latina participants. To protect their identities, names

were intended to be removed; however, several participants requested their names be disclosed.
I have accordingly included first names, but not last names in order to maintain some anonymity.
The other participants created their own pseudonyms. The data was stored in a locked file to
which only the researcher had access. Table 2 provides a summary of the characteristics of each
participants' background.

Table 2: Characteristics*of Interviewed Participants

Participant	Country of Birth	Year in College	English as a Second language	Organization Affiliation	Self Identification	Size of Family Unit
Alejandra	México	Sophomore	Yes	Army	Latina	4
Cris	México	Junior	Yes	MEChA	Mexicana, Latina, Chicana	7
Isaura	U.S.	Senior	Yes	McNair Program & Sorority	Latina, Chicana	5
Karla	México	Senior	Yes	Sorority	Mexicana, Latina, Chicana	4
Laura	U.S	Sophomore	Yes	McNair Program	Latina	6
Mauryn	U.S	Junior	English Emerging	N/A	Latina, Chicana	5
Maria	México	Junior	Bilingual Education	MEChA	Chicana	5
Maria de Jesus	U.S.	Sophomore	Yes	Sorority	Mexicana	7
Nancy	U.S	Senior	No	McNair Program	Latina	5
Alma	México	Freshman	No	Sorority	Mexicana	5
* Names used are pseudonyms.						

Five of the participants were born in Mexico and five in the United States. All ten
participants were the first-generation college students, meaning neither father nor mother
graduated from a four-year college or university. Among these Latinas, several differences and
similarities could be identified; however, I focused on the similarities of their personal
experiences—not to assert homogeneity, but instead to collectively provide a counter discourse
to disrupt hegemonic dominant ideologies about Latinas.

Based on family size and finances, each participant's family is from a low-income background according to *federal low-income level of 2007* (see Appendix E). All of these participants live in small, rural towns in the State of Washington (see Appendix F), including Airways Heights, Big Bend, Cashmere, Othello, Grandview, Quincy, Manton, Mattawa, Pasco, Royal City, East Wenatchee, and Wenatchee.

In the following section, I provide brief backgrounds on each of the participants of this study. My intent here is to only introduce each participant to the reader. A more in-depth view of each particular experience will be done in chapter four and five. Participants were free to use the language in which they felt most comfortable; however, most of the interviews ended up being conducted in English or at the very least, in both (Spanish and English) languages.

Meeting the Participants

Alejandra

Alejandra is the second of two children and the only daughter in a family of four. One of her nightmares while growing-up, apart from being separated from her birth mother and later meeting her step mother, was the way she appeared when she smiled. She explained, "I had a huge overbite; my front teeth were moved forward three times than normal, I had an overgrown mouth. My jaw is really small for the teeth I grew…so I had about 10 extractions in order to have normal sized teeth." In the interview, behind blue braces, she displayed a beautiful smile along with a positive and confident attitude.

Due to the constant the struggle her father had to endure in order to provide for the family, a decision was made to move from Mexico to California when she was 12 years old. The move to the United States would negatively impact Alejandra's childhood. For Alejandra, these

teen years were "horrible." The recent arrival to a new place with an unfamiliar culture and customs, the inability to communicate in English, and no friends, impacted Alejandra is self-worth negatively. She expressed the feeling of isolation during the first four years of her life in the United States–from ages12 to 16. She states "everyone was making fun of me for the way I dressed…I was only a little girl and I used to wear …puffy dresses. But, the girls here, my age, were wearing miniskirts." Alejandra described these years as "horrible" and "painful" years. At the age of 23, looking for an avenue to leave her parents' house, she enrolled in the military. Alejandra is currently a sophomore in college; although, she has been in school for almost four years, it has been difficult for her to transfer all her credits from different institutions each time the military moved her to a different location.

I met Alejandra in the lobby of the McNair Scholars office at the University (a regional university in the Pacific Northwest) as she was seeking information about the program. I explained the details of the program and my own experience as an alumnus, she asked bluntly, *"How have you done it? I mean, being Mexican, female, married, how have you completed your education?"* Her question made me pause a moment as I rarely answer such a question with a simple response.

Alejandra's straightforward questions made me realize that she was not there for a detailed orientation of the program, or an academic guidance session, but for mentoring of a different kind, for an honest talk between two women of color. I invited her to my office, where we talked for almost two hours. She shared with me her childhood, her military experiences, details as to why she had distanced herself from her stepmother, how much she loved her father, her desire to have a child of her own, the struggle to complete her degree, and the relationship

she had with her husband. She was attempting to negotiate being a "traditional Mexican wife and an intellectual woman."

Throughout our conversation, I was connecting her experiences with my own and unconsciously going back to the theoretical foundations I had designed for the study. The connections were even more apparent when Alejandra expressed her frustration regarding the socially-constructed gender roles in our own Mexican culture that obstructed her educational path. I had a strong desired to take notes, but had not asked her if she wanted to be a participant in my study let alone mentioned what my study was about. I chose not to interrupt the flow of our conversation, nor jeopardize the rapidly growing trust between us, nor the smooth process in which our relationship had started to form. Therefore, when we concluded our meeting, I mentioned that I wanted to talk to her about a study that I was doing and we set a time for a second meeting. She accepted without hesitation.

During the writing of this dissertation, Alejandra has kept in touch by occasionally inviting me over to her home for dinner, other times we've had dinner at our home or have had conversation over coffee. Currently, Alejandra is finishing her undergraduate education and contemplating the idea of continuing her education in graduate school. Alejandra also had a baby in late December 2008 fulfilling one of her strongest wishes.

Alma

Alma is 17 years old and is currently in her first year in college. She is the oldest child and only female in a family of five. Alma has waist-length black hair, a moderately light complexion, and dark brown eyes. Her parents had limited education in Mexico—her stepfather went to school up to the fourth grade, and her mother managed to complete the 11th grade.

Alma called my cell phone to volunteer to be interviewed. She introduced herself mentioning that she had heard about the study and would love to participate. I remember noticing that Alma spoke English like a native speaker.

The day of the interview, Alma came to my office a few minutes early and seemed thrilled to be part of this study. As she sat down and put her bag on the floor, I explained that the interview was going to take a bit more than 45 minutes due to my experiences interviewing the other participants. She smiled and said, "I have so many experiences to share with you that two hours will not be enough." She sat in the chair to sign the research contract agreement and we began right away.

Alma was born in the state of Colima, Mexico, which is located to the Southeast of Mexico City. She was raised by a single mother. While her mother worked, Alma's alcoholic grandmother and aunt would take care of them. Alma said resentfully, "They were taking care of us [but,] they didn't really like it; my grandma saw it as a way to earn a paycheck in order to supply her alcohol habit and her smoking addiction." After a couple of years, Alma's mother fell in love again to a man that traveled back and forth from Mexico to the United States to see her. When Alma's mother made the decision to move to the United States, Alma was only 5 years old.

She recalled every moment in detail, "We had to cross the border—we had to cross the river and all of that…it took us like a month and a half to reach our destination because my mom ended up becoming somebody's housemaid." As Alma was talking, I was going back to my own memories of the border, the desert, the dry grass, the heat, the dark water described to me by my parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. My familiarity with these experiences provided a framework to understand, to a certain extent, the feeling of crossing the U.S.–Mexico border.

But I found myself struggling to understand how it took approximately a month for them to reach their destination and why Alma's mother ended up being somebody's housemaid. "She was doing the cleaning, the cooking because they—the coyote—wouldn't let my stepdad talk to my mom. All they wanted was the money."

Alma explained that her father struggled to send the amount of money asked of him in order for the Coyote to turn over his family. The Coyote decided to pay himself with the service of Alma's mother and later her mother was moved to the house of the Coyote's relatives to continue serving as a housemaid. She claimed that "my mom would have to cook and clean and whenever my stepdad wanted to talk to her, they would not let her because all they were interested in was the money. So we were transferred to different family members of the Coyote every time and my stepdad would have to pay every family member to let us leave the house and come [to the Pacific Northwest]."

While this conversation was taking place, Alma's voice accelerated, but noticing my facial expression asking for clarification on several occasions she slowed-down and elaborated on different points of her story. At other times, her voice would crack and she would pause for several seconds, clear her throat, and continue sharing her story. It seemed as if she wanted to share with me as much as she could about her life in the little time we had. I could sense the pain as she shared with me her story, and showed me her wounds resulting from the bordercrossing experiences. Alma's life was so interesting and unique. I must say I had so many other questions about her life experiences that I did not get to ask due to time constraints. I had the sense that she was only scratching the surface of her life story.

Once they were reunited with her stepfather, Alma focused her energy on "learning the language." For Alma, learning the English language was more than an academic requirement.

The role of a translator was bestowed upon her within months of arriving in the United State. At only six years old and after just a few months of learning English, she had to translate bills, rental contracts, legal letters, school announcements, her own academic progress report and at doctor's appointments. She recalled being faced with a difficult situation while translating to her mom during her class conference:

> I would constantly play the role of a translator. My mom would tell me, "You come with me to such and such appointment" and she would ask me, "What are they saying? What do I need to say?" It was a lot harder when the time came to translate my class conference. Coming to the classroom was difficult because if you are doing badly you do not want to tell your mom you are doing badly. I would cry and cry and I would be saying, "I don't know, I don't know." And my mom would ask me, "What is this word mean?" and I would say "It means bad" and continue crying.

Currently, Alma is a freshman in college and a founder of a Latina sorority. She keeps herself occupied with extra-curricular activities such as being a member of a traditional Mexican folkloric dance group and involvement in Chicano events, including fundraising and *Cinco de Mayo*.

Cris

Cris is a 23 year old Latina with shoulder-length black curly hair, light complexion and big round eyes. I met Cris in a MEChA meeting. As the meeting began, Cris sat in silence on one side of the table while the president of the organization asked the group to come to order. In my notes about this meeting, I described Cris as quiet and shy. However, she helped me realize

soon that my perception of her was incorrect. During this meeting, Cris spoke only once, but her wise words were carefully chosen to counter a statement being discussed. The group acknowledged her desire to speak, and everyone paid close attention to her remarks. Cris is the fourth of five children. She was born in Michoacán, Mexico; however, she does not remember many details of her childhood there with the exception of the landscape that she described in the following way:

> We had a little creek in front of the house. We had cows, pigs, everything. Um, I guess it was really nice. We sort of lived away from people … I remember just like playing with my brothers and sisters. Well, we usually played more with my sisters because somehow my parents had said that … boys and girls couldn't play together. And my brother is the only guy in the family and it was kinda sad for him because we always kicked him out of the games …

Cris described having a "nice" but "difficult" childhood. Nice in a sense that she was "free and naïve," nothing worried her. She would play the entire day. On some occasions Cris and her sisters would go through the depopulated hills and valleys to bring the cows back to their corral. Nevertheless, she believes that the reason her family to migrate to the United States was to keep her family together. She explained,

> The reasons we came to the U.S. was because my dad usually would leave us in *el rancho* [ranch] for some days and my mom didn't like that. She was the only one out there with us … She was sort of scared that something could happen like earthquakes, *piquete de alacran* [scorpion stings], and things like that. I remember she would always have to kill snakes around our home. She was tired

of living in *el rancho* by herself without my dad because he would leave us in there.

She was only 7 years old when her family decided to migrate to the United States. Her experience was quite different from Alma's. Cris described her experience crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in the following way:

> We came…the first time crossing through the border was really easy. They told us to … dress like an "American." We wore those puffy dresses, now that I think about it, that wasn't dressing "American." We were walking through, a city, I don't know what it was, we had to walk through some sidewalk then we got into a taxi and that was it.

After living in the United States for a year, Cris mentioned that her parents were not happy and decided to go back to Michoacán during the winter. However, in the fall of the following year, Cris' parents had not found a job so they decided to cross the U.S.-Mexico border one more time.

Cris explained her second experiences "We had to walk through the desert for 30 minutes. I remember there was a time when the border patrol passed right in front of us and we hid in some small bushes." Cris' mother strongly believed that the reason for the border patrol not seeing them "was due to her prayers." She believed that "it was a miracle" from God because according to Cris the family was so obvious.

Later in the conversation, Cris mentioned that she "was really scared" while crossing the desert. Cris had heard in some adults' conversation that "gangsters come out from the desert, steal your money, cut off your ears if they can't take your earrings off, and even your hands for your rings." While crossing the border, Cris recalled having some golden earrings that her

mother had glued the two pieces of earrings, so she would not lose them and walking through the desert she was covering her earrings with her hands "so that the gangsters wouldn't see the earrings through the distance."

Cris recalled other images for instance, her father carrying her little sister, who was only one year, through the desert. She also remembered a fence and as she mentioned it, I recalled the U.S.-Mexico border image stored in my mind since I was 12 and wondered if there is anyone in elite positions who could relate to these experiences, someone that could remember the actual breaks and laminates walls with its graffiti and even remembering the smell of garbage. As Cris continued her story, in some strange way I felt we had similar feelings regarding the U.S.-Mexico border. This border was a barrier to prohibit the migration of humans and animals to the north. It was at this border that I had to let go of my parents' hands. The first time we were separated, I was only twelve and afraid that I would not see them again. They had to cross the desert and risk their lives while I went through immigration counsel.

It seemed that our experiences made it easier for us to understand each other and know the difference between right and wrong, yet you see your parents risking the lives of the entire family to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in hopes of offering a better future to their children. As my father once explained, "Is either risking your life in the border or dying of hunger in your own country, there is no other choice."

Cris' interview was two hours and 15 minutes, which in my opinion was too short for what she had to offer. I wanted to continue the interview, but a knock on my office door made me realized that I had another appointment waiting for me. In my notebook, I wrote "Cris is a passionate Chicana thinker with a soul of a fighter against racial/ethnic inequalities, her

determination and aspirations will lead her to great accomplishments." Currently, Cris is a junior and planning to continue her education and obtain a law degree.

Karla

Karla was born in Zamora, Michoacán, México. She is 22 years old, the oldest of three children and the only daughter. I met Karla in a presentation I conducted at a sorority meeting regarding my study. After this presentation, Karla wrote down her contact information in my notebook and showed interest in participating in the study. Karla is an assertive Latina who acts and looks much older than her actual age. She presented quite a methodical style about herself and her life.

Unlike, Cris and Alma, for Karla, crossing the border was just another trip. She was only 7 years old when her family decided to visit her maternal grandparents in the State of Washington for a wedding of her mother's sister. Her grandparents had been in the United States since the 80s, separated from Karla's mother, who missed them tremendously. In Mexico, Karla's father was an English and Math teacher. Karla's mother dropped out of school one year before completing her major. Nevertheless, the level of education of this couple was a great accomplishment during the early 1990s in Mexico. After Karla was born, her parents opened a grocery store in Zamora. The fact that Karla's father was a teacher, and they owned a grocery store, facilitated the process of obtaining a visiting visa from the U.S. council of immigration. After a couple of trips to the United States to visit the Grandparents, Karla's family decided to stay in the United States. Karla mentioned that she adjusted to the educational system really quickly. She stated:

I entered second grade elementary but they moved me to third grade cause my

mom decided to fight. I was *en el colegio*[5] in Mexico, so I knew everything they

were doing in second grade up here. I was like passing whatever they were

learning. So I came into third grade, and I learned English pretty fast like within a

year. So I moved to just English classes. It was easier for me to pick it up. I

learned the language within six or seven months. So it wasn't bad.

Karla mentioned that her transition was easy and smooth; however, for her parents the story was

different. Both parents were forced to obtain jobs in the only workplace that did not require

them to present valid documentation to work—the orchards. Karla said that her mother had a

difficult time adjusting to the physical work. Due to her fatigue during long, hot days of work,

she fell at sleep in top of the apple trees leaning her body in strong branches.

Because both parents needed to be at work at 4:00 a.m., Karla, only 7, became the person

responsible for getting up every morning, and preparing breakfast for her brother, then sending

him to school before catching her own school bus. Karla is currently a senior and planning to

attend graduate school in social work. She is also involved in extra curriculum activities,

including being the president of her sorority.

Isaura

Isaura was only 19 at the time of the interview. Isaura is the oldest of four siblings and

the only daughter. She has dark brunette waist-length hair with bright red highlights and tattoos

on her arm and lower back. Isaura surprised me with her extensive vocabulary and incredible

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[5] *Colegios* are private institutions in Mexico run by either Protestant or Catholic organizations and include
preschool, elementary, and middle school. These institutions are usually quite expensive and prestigious around
Mexico. A child who attends these schools is seemed by the majority as upper class.

leadership style. She was born in California and moved to the Pacific Northwest when she was a teenager.

In her parents' house, there are some "unspoken rules," according to Isaura, that she must respects and obey. "I always have to make sure that I wear sleeves and that I don't show things around the house including my tattoo, so I won't be disrespectful. I don't get home too late, I get up early, and I do some cleaning." She confessed that in her own apartment, she does not feel the necessity or responsibility to get up early nor clean as frequently. Isaura has crossed some boundaries and broken some of those "unspoken rules" and by doing so, has exposed other members of the family to different customs. She shared one occasion when her grandmother was amazed to see her piercing.

I used to have a piercing on my lip, you know and I visited [my grandma] one

time. I felt so uncomfortable that my hair was all red and my piercing, she just

kept on staring at it and staring at it, she had to stop the conversation and said,

Isaura esa cosa que traes ahí no te duele? [That thing you have there does not

hurt?] I started laughing and I was like, "No."   She blushed, she was so

embarrassed to ask me this, but she just thought it was incredible. And, I was just,

"No, no, it doesn't hurt." She is like, "What is it feel like?" I was, "Well, it is just

like the piercing on your ear," it is the same thing, so it is not painful.

Isaura removed her piercing; however, after a long conversation with a criminal justice professor at her university. She concluded the story, saying: "I know how I need to look, to get a job or get into graduate school, once I do that my piercing is coming back as well as my red hair." She understood that in order to "pass for White" (Butler, 1993) and overcome the cultural and racial

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barriers she needed to dyed her hair with a more conservative color and remove her jewelry from her lip.

Isaura is a senior and recently got accepted into a PhD program in molecular biology. Before getting accepted, she had an interview with the chair of the department. She not only prepared herself by getting familiar with all the requirements of the department and research studies of the faculty, but she also drastically changed her physical appearance to portray a seriousness and dedicated student.

Laura

Laura was born in the United States. She is an outgoing and positive person with a light tan complexion and curly, shoulder-length hair. She is the middle child of three siblings. At 18, Laura's mother got married. Once married, her parents decided to come to the United States looking for "employment and better opportunities like anyone else." Laura mentioned that her parents had only 18 in their possession when they arrived in the United States to begin their life. Laura is proud of what her parents have accomplished and, more importantly, she is grateful for all their sacrifices as they resulted in great academic and life opportunities for her.

Since childhood, Laura assumed the responsibility of repaying her parents' sacrifices, as she called it, with what she knew best, having good grades in school. Good grades were not only to please her parents and family members, but also to receive praise which was something that she constantly sought. She stated, "At about age 8 I realized that the better I performed in school the more respect I would earn [within] my family. I began to receive awards and recognition for my dedication and persistence to my education." Laura disclosed that this secret was kept deep in her heart because in some strange way she felt guilty for seeking attention. During her high

school years she was teased by her friends, who used to call her the "Mexican nerd," in part because she loved to read books during summer breaks.

Although she continued to excel academically, during her teen years Laura faced new challenges for the first time—doubting herself and feeling inferior. She said, "I never needed to go too far as to see images portraying the youth as simply not good enough. Media attacks our self-esteem and after being hurt, we attempt to cover the pain by fitting an 'ideal.' I know that the pain our youth encounters leads them to feeling unworthy and inferior." Laura at pressed concern for future generations and the distortion of Latina images in media. "Therefore, I want to help others to be more accepting of who they are," she said.

I met Laura in May 2007 in a McNair Scholar workshop. As a McNair scholar, she is applying to Psychology PhD programs around the nation. She was a Junior in college when this interview was conducted.

Maria

Maria is 20 years old and was born in Mexico. She is petite, with dark hair and enormous dark brown eyes. Maria's voice is soft and mellow. In my notes, I described her as a Chicana with strong political views. Maria led several interesting and controversial discussions during a MEChA meeting. Like Cris, Maria was born in Michoacán, Mexico and is the oldest of three siblings. Neither of her parents had an opportunity to attend school. Maria's father had been traveling back and forth to the United States, since he was 19, in search of employment opportunities. Having the family separated for months at a time, Maria's mother decided to come with her husband to California. Maria explained this dynamic in the following way:

My mom got tired of living down there without my dad and going through a lot of financial struggles. She had to work in *La Milpa* [corn plants], so she just wanted to live with her husband, she was tired of liv[ing] by herself. My brother at this time was four; I am a year and a half older than him. So we immigrated to the United States. My mom crossed through *a cerro [desert],* my brother and I crossed through the line with my cousins' papers. My dad was waiting for us in California. My uncle went to the border and we went in his car. We passed as his children because our cousins are the same age.

Maria's family remained in California until she was a sophomore in high school, at which time they relocated to the Northwest.

In California, Maria's family was living with her uncle, four aunts, and three cousins. There were approximately 12 people living in a two bedroom, one bathroom home. "We had a bunch of people living in that house and there were only two rooms. Rooms were filled, living room was filled. Why? Because we could not afford to pay rent by ourselves, which is why we kept living with each other."

Maria's mother had family in Washington who encouraged them to relocate since "*no estaba tan cara la renta* [the rent was not so expensive] and that there is always jobs in the orchards." After moving to the Pacific Northwest, Maria's family lived with her aunt. Her parents found a job "*empaque de peras* [packing pears]."

Maria completed high school in Washington and is currently a junior in college, pursuing a degree in education. Her long term goal is to get a PhD in American Studies.

Maria de Jesus

Maria de Jesus was born in California and is the oldest of five children. She is of medium height and a bit plump, with long dark hair and dark skin. I met Maria de Jesus while she was selling sweet *empanadas* to raise funds for her sorority. Interested in her sorority, I asked her to provide more details about her organization. After a long conversation, she invited me to one of their meetings. I took the opportunity to present my study and asked if they wanted to participate. Moreover, I took a few minutes to talk about the importance of seeking higher education and encouraged them to apply to graduate school.

Similarly, Maria de Jesus had been paving the way for her four sisters to attend an institution of education higher education. She was the first in her family to attend college. After a year, Maria de Jesus convinced her two sisters, who graduated from high school, to come to college with her. Now, the three of them are renting an apartment and attending college together. The other two younger sisters, who are still in high school, are motivated to apply and attend this university with their sisters.

Although, Maria de Jesus was born in California, her family moved to Mexico for four years. She explained that, "when we got back we didn't remember any English, so went to ESL classes. I was already 11 when we came back."

Maria de Jesus is 20 years old and a sophomore in college. She would like to complete her degree and go back to her community to be a role model for other Latinas.

Mauryn

Mauryn is 20 years old with short dark hair highlighted with blond. Like Alejandra, I met Mauryn at the McNair Scholar program lounge. She was born in Washington and is the second child of four—she also has a twin sister. Mauryn's parents immigrated to the United States as

adolescents. As she recalled her parents' lives, she focused on their struggles against social

inequality and mentioned how proud she feels of them for overcoming challenges and

"succeed[ing] with everything they have done, they have improved themselves compared to

many people I know that continue working in the orchards." She recalled living in apartments

while growing up. She connected her parents' success with a purchase of a house and other

material wealth.

Mauryn expressed poignantly that her mother got married only due to the constant

encouragement by her grandmother. Coming from a low social economic background and

leaving in a small town in Mexico, Mauryn's grandmother was raised in an environment where

"for most working-class Chicanas/Latinas, the major life objectives are marriage and work"

(Blea, 1992, p.119). Therefore, for Mauryn's grandmother, marriage was a promise of

independence and hope of a better life and encouraged her daughter to find a husband. Mauryn

expressed that "my mom did not want to get married. She wanted to be single, have her own

little restaurant, and living by that. But her mom, my grandma, said 'No!' My grandma believed

that she needed to get married to get out of the house. So my mom got married just to leave."

For these reasons and several more, Mauryn is determined to have an education and follow her

mother's *consejos* [advised], "She tells us to do what we want to do before marriage."

Mauryn's strong, opinionated attitude facilitated a direct and open conversation about her

experiences. She would not hesitate about naming and describing the discrimination and

oppression she has encountered in school. Bitterly, she criticized the present stereotypes of

Chicanas/Latinas in her small town:

> It is everything that a little town should not be. If something happens, everybody
>
> knows. I mean, if your friend gets pregnant, everybody knows and they are going

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to assume that you're going to end up pregnant, too. Then it gets back to your

parents and even though your parents expected you not to get pregnant, they think

that you're going to get pregnant anyways. Your teachers think that you are

going to get pregnant, too …

These stereotypes that Mauryn described have impacted her life. Once the parents and

educators have negative perceptions of Latina students in this small town, the challenges

increase. Mauryn was not only facing rigorous and challenging courses in high school and the

complexity of her adolescent years, but also the negative stereotypes and negative discursive

practices of educators. As Mauryn explained, educators believed that Latinas are not worth their

absolute dedication and mentorship since "you are going to get pregnant, too, and not go to

college so they do not pay attention to you." Moreover, these stereotypes overwhelmed Mauryn

and she mentioned, "There is no point to go against their expectation."

However, Mauryn managed to graduate from high school and finished her Associate's

degree at a community college. She is currently a junior. Her life aspirations are to graduate

with a Bachelor's degree and pursue an MBA, get out of her little town and buy her own home.

Nancy

Nancy was born in California. She is the older child of three siblings. She has light

brunette hair with blond highlights. Due to her light complexion, Nancy stated, "People do not

know I am Latina, I have to let them know." But, she also mentioned that her light complexion

is not the only Latina stereotype she has disproved. Nancy said that she constantly comes across

other stereotypes including "expectation[s] that [Latinas] do not do well in classes. Several

professors think I am White because I get 4.0 in the classes and they're surprised when I tell

them that I'm not, you know. I had a lot of experiences like that."

As a common occurrence with many of my participants, her family moved to Mexico

when Nancy was only 2 years old. She explained that her parents were economically stable in

Mexico, for this reason, she and her brother and her attended Catholic school. Nancy's mother

was a stay at home mom and could stress the importance of education by teaching them, at an

early age, to read and write. Nancy explained,

> "I learned to read when I was 3 or 4. When I started school in Mexico, I skipped
>
> the *kinder*[6] and went to first grade because I knew how to read and write. I
>
> remember going to class and doing pretty good. I felt pretty confident; I felt I
>
> knew what I was doing and then, when I moved here, to the United States, I was
>
> put in kindergarten. I was 6 years old."

She expressed deep disappointment in the U.S education system for being placed back

into kindergarten when she had already skipped those grades in Mexico. Her ability to read and

write in Spanish was not part of the U.S class curriculum; therefore, her abilities were not

valued. Nancy is currently 24 years old and a senior in college. Nancy is a McNair scholar and

her ability to retain information as well as being a good listener are few abilities that have help

Nancy to main a great GPA and be a great student.

After having an introduction of the 10 participants, I describe the process of data analysis

is the section below. This section also depicts the themes selected in chapter four and five and

---

[6] *El kinder* is a common term for preschool education for children ages four to six, children in Mexico are in *el kinder* for more than one year.

responds to the three research questions stated in this study regarding the life experiences of college Chicana/Latina students.

Data Analysis

According to Wellington (2000), "there is not one, single, correct way of doing" data analysis, but there are general steps that could be followed" (p. 134). The data analysis was conducted throughout the research process via various qualitative techniques, including reading and studying the data to develop a coding scheme. This scheme was developed by coding all data and developing a conceptual map that linked codes and themes that emerged from the research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1991).

Before this integral process, I listened to the tapes and reviewed the typed transcriptions several times for accuracy. Each transcription yielded, on average, 20 single-spaced pages per interview, producing about 200 pages of print. When voice inflections or laughter qualified a remark in a striking way, I made a note of it in the transcript. I spent an average of seven hours transcribing per one hour of recording in order to insure accuracy. The very act of transcribing was for me, in many ways, an important part of the analysis. It was during the transcription process that I jotted notes about comments I had not probed to my satisfaction while the interview was underway, either to revisit with the participants or to bring up in future interviews.

Transcribing became more than just a preliminary stage to coding and analysis; it was the first time in the analysis that I noticed the participants' voices echoing or contradicting each other. As I began coding the data, and after completing the transcription of a couple of interviews, I experienced numerous "ah-ha" moments as specific themes started to emerge. These moments emerged not from what I assumed to be obvious or expected themes, but at times

when my participants' stories challenged and/or reshaped my own perspective or biases as they

uncovered their own experiences.

The coding was conducted manually—that is, without the use of a computer program.

For each transcript, I created accompanying coding sheets on which I organized various themes.

All my coding sheets were written by hand and were arranged and re-arranged to collapse

themes into more generalized themes. After completing all the coding sheets from each

participant, the most prominent topics found in this process are summarized in table 3.

Table 3: Primary Codes

Applying to college (process)	Accused of plagiarizing
Ashamed of their accent	Contradictions and uncertainty
Beauty (impacting their identities)	Critical ways of knowing
Belonging	Crossing the U.S.-Mexico border
Clashing cultures	Cultural ideologies and traditions
Deculturation	Discrimination in the orchards
Devaluing their knowledge	Family support
ESL experiences	Family sickness
ESL segregation	Fear of deportation
Family responsibilities	Federally funded programs as support
Hybrid identities	Friendship
Inferiority	Hybrid identities
Leadership	Institutionalize religious ideologies
Legal battles	Legal status struggles
Low self-esteem	Living in a White people world
Male domination	Low expectations from educators
Mentoring	Marginalization
Minority/majority	Marital difficulties among parents
Negative experience in school	*Mestiza*/Critical consciousness
Poor education	Navigating in both worlds
Proving myself	Negative immigration sentiments
Paving the way	Orchard experiences
Seeking for knowledge	Performing different identities
The Other	Proving "them" wrong
Traditional gender role expectations	Powerless feelings
Stereotypes-we have been labeled	Teen pregnancy

In order to rearrange the themes according to the statements of each participant I utilized

a wall chart—"Matrix Table" (Wellington, 2000). The dimension of the Matrix was 52 rows and

10 columns. The columns corresponded to the 10 participants and the rows to the 52 codes.

According to each participant and each code, I included a partial quote in each cell box of this

Matrix to create an overall understanding of the experiences among all of the participants. There were six themes that were not disclosed in this study including, beauty, leadership, friendship, family sickness, legal litigation, and marital difficulties among parents. The reasons for not including these themes were to ensure the safety of the participants, their parents, and their extended family members, and to not betray the trust bestowed on me because I was asked by the participants during the interviews to not include these pieces of information (Wellington, 2000). Nevertheless, the omitted themes of Latina life experiences I chose not to include in this study are in no way any less interesting or less relevant.

After digesting this raw data for several months, I began to notice strong patterns. These patterns were not mutually exclusive from each other, but markedly intertwined. From the collection of all the interviews, several major themes emerged as prominent in the lives of all of my participants. It is crucial to clarify the content related to all themes that emerged throughout the interviews in overlapping sequence.

Table 4: Finalized Themes from Data Collection

How do multiple systems of oppression, institutional stereotypes, and socially-constructed race and gender roles impact Latinas academic goals and life achievements?

Multiple oppressive systems affecting Latinas (Glorieta). Intersectional oppressions and Social Injustice
    o **In the orchards**
        ▪ **Poor conditions**
        ▪ **Unjust (discrimination situation)**
    o **In schools**
        ▪ **Poor mentoring**
        ▪ **Poor education**
        ▪ **Deculturation**
        ▪ **Living in a White people world**
        ▪ **Segregation in classrooms**
        ▪ **Language depravation**
        ▪ **Ashamed of their accent**
        ▪ **Disappointment of ESL classes**
        ▪ **Minority/majority experience shock**
        ▪ **Devaluation of culture**

- **Low expectation of educators**
- **Accused of plagiarizing**
- **Teen pregnancy**
  - o **In their communities**
    - **Oppressive institutionalized religious ideologies**
    - **Cultural ideologies and traditions**
    - **Patriarchal community**
    - **Traditional gender role expectations**
  - o **Dominant discourse in immigration law**
    - **Negative nationality sentiments**
    - **Legal status issues**
    - **Fears of deportation**
    - **Crossing the U.S.-Mexico border**

How do Latinas negotiate, disrupt, and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression and what tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance do they employ? How do they employ them in order to overcome these negatively preconceived notions or stereotypes?

- **The impact of these hegemonic narratives (the impact of *la glorieta*):**
  - **Being labeled (negative stereotypes and perceptions)**
  - **Us vs. Them**
  - **Feelings of not belonging**
  - **Marginalization**
  - **Inferiority feelings / low self-esteem**
  - **Devaluing Latina knowledge**
  - **Feeling powerless**
  - **Oppositional agency and *Mestiza* Consciousness**
    - **Proving "Them" wrong**
    - **Proving themselves**
    - **Seeking for knowledge**
    - **Tactics and strategies /Critical ways of knowing**
  - o **Navigating through Borderlands**
    - **Clashing cultures**
    - **Contradiction and uncertainty (Where do I belong?)**
    - **Hybrid identities**

Finally, how do they develop a positive sense of self-identity?

- o **Paving the way for future generations**
  - **Feeling responsible to contribute in their household**
- o **Support Network**
  - **Family support**
  - **Federally funded program**
  - **Other organizations such as sororities**

It is crucial to emphasize all these themes are highly interrelated. The overlapping nature

of the themes is evident due to the intersectionality of race, class, sex, nationality, language, and

religion. Not only does some content overlap into other themes, but the themes are

interconnected in such a way that it creates a much fuller picture of the experiences of these participants.

Thus, chapter four deconstructs the life experiences of college Chicana/Latina students in the Pacific Northwest analyzing the multiple system of oppression in their every-day life experiences.   Focusing on the structure and its *module operandi* in place to oppress Chicana/Latina, I attempt to answer *how do multiple systems of oppression embedded in socially constructed gender roles, racial stereotypes, and other negative preconceived notions impact Chicana/Latina students' academic goals and life achievements?* Utilizing LatCrit and Chicana epistemologies, this chapter critically analyzes each storytelling, and brings the prominent themes to the forefront.

Chapter five, utilized the theoretical framework of LatCrit and Chicana epistemologies, to focus on the second and third question of this study; *how do Latinas negotiate, disrupt, and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression and what tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance do they employ* and *how they develop a positive identity*. This chapter centers the prominent themes stated in Table 4, along with their negotiations and disruptions of status-quo and hegemonic narratives. In this chapter, I also explore what makes these colleges Chicana/Latina students defy the odd to accomplish their academic and life aspirations focusing on their "critical ways of knowing" and their "oppositional agency."

CHAPTER FOUR

LA GLORIETA AND ITS MULTIPLE FACETS OF OPPRESSION:

CLASS, RACE/ETHNICITY, GENDER, RELIGIOUS, LANGUAGE, NATIONALITY

AND LEGAL STATUS

In this chapter, I focus on deconstructing the life experiences of the Chicana/Latina college students in the Pacific Northwest by analyzing the multiple systems of oppression in their everyday experiences. The subordinations appear in diverse forms as the participants describe dominant discourses of power such as socially-constructed gender roles, racial stereotypes, and other negative preconceived notions of Chicanas/Latinas in the United States. The negative dominant discourses of power are entrenched in asymmetrical relations that dominate, control, and maintain an oppressive social, political, and economic system for Chicanas/Latinas. At the forefront is the question, *How do multiple systems of oppression embedded in socially-constructed gender roles, racial stereotypes, and other negative preconceived notions impact Chicana/Latina academic goals and life achievements?* Utilizing Latina/o critical theory and Chicana feminist epistemologies, this chapter critically analyzes each story and the multiple intertwining facets of oppression.

Below, I provide a metaphorical concept to illustrate the nature and the *modus operandi* of this multifaceted oppression, as well as its impact in Chicana/Latina students in the Pacific Northwest. Although the oppression seems at times to be monolithic, it is interesting to note that the participants' stories also illustrate strategies of resistance and disruptions of such domination.

The stories of the participants are divided into six sections: 1) The Intersections of Race and Class on Chicanas/Latinas Life Experiences, 2) Race, Ethnicity, and Language: Inescapable Realities in U.S. Schools, 3) The Inescapable Stereotypes: Racialized and Gendered Bodies, 4) The Intersection of Religious Ideologies, Sexuality, and the Holy Trinity of Race, Class, and Gender, 5) Deslenguadas: Barreras del Lenguaje [Without Tongue: Language Barriers], and finally, 6) Dilemmas of Race/Ethnicity, Language, Nationality and Legal Status Troubling Latina Peace of Mind. According to my findings, the prominent facets of oppression visible in the life experiences of these participants include race/ethnicity and gender discrimination, class disparities, institutionalized religious prejudice, sexist ideologies, language devaluation and nationalistic intolerance.

La Glorieta

Simply by glancing at the lives of these Chicana/Latina participants, it is evident to me that they must be understood as gendered and racialized bodies of contemporary capitalism. Considering the overall experiences and background of these participants, one can no longer focus on gender and ethnicity as singular and separate facets to describe the life experiences of Chicanas/Latinas (Bettie, 2003; Saldívar-Hull, 2000). By separating these facets, and centering attention to only gender or ethnicity is viewed as a reduction of identities (Bettie, 2003) and endangers the quest for "human emancipation" (Horkheimer, 1982) by overcoming oppression. Moreover, Moraga (1983) argued that "the danger lies in ranking the oppressions" and "in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression" (p. 52-53). In other words, deeming race/ethnicity to be more important than gender or class, or more valid than sexuality, compromises the core of social justice. Address

Thus, several Chicanas and critical Latina/o theorists utilized the intersectionality approach or class, race, and gender to describe the "triple oppression" (NietoGomez, 1997). I must affirm that studies utilizing the intersectionality of racism, classism, and sexism not only provide insights into the relationship between power and the construction of social roles, but also unveil the hidden *modus operandi* of collections of patterns and habits that make up patriarchy and other types of domination.

I argue, however, that analyzing the life experiences of Chicanas/Latinas through the intersection of race, class, and gender does not do justice to the contemporary *Mestiza* body. The life experiences of the Chicana/Latina participants of this study reveal not only race, class, and gender subordinations, but also subordination of nationality, language, and religious ideologies. These findings direct my attention to Edén Torres (2003), a Chicana feminist, who suggested that Chicana subjectivities are "born of life lived [experiences] in the crossroad between races, nations, languages, sexualities, and cultures capable of transformation and relocation" (p. 16). Although, Torres (2003) did not mention religion as part of Chicana subjectivities, several others Chicana scholars including Anzaldúa (1987), Garcia, (1989), NietoGomez (1997) and Vidal (1997) criticized institutionalized religious ideologies for restricting the Chicana role as women in the church and in community (NietoGomez, 1997).

Therefore, after extensive analysis of the life and academic experiences of the participants of this study, I conclude that in order to analyze the subjectivities of the *Mestiza* and Chicana, one must understand their subjectivities, not only as gendered, racialized, and ethnicized, but as a nationalized body (Alarcón, 1988; Anzaldúa, 1999; Bettie, 2003; Sandoval, 2000; Trujillo, 1991) who are residing in a social location where language deprivations,

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institutionalized religious prejudices, sexist ideologies, class disparities, and nationalist intolerance continue to prevail.

Consequently, with a focus on unveiling the hidden mechanism of oppression embedded in the U.S. society's dominant discourse that affects working class Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest, I offer a conceptual map—*La Glorieta* [round-about]. I formulate this metaphorical concept to have the understanding of these prominent and palpable facets of oppression experienced by the participants of this study, which include race, class, gender, nationality, legal status, religious ideologies, and language. These facets are present in the life experiences of these participants as dynamic apparatus intersecting and forming mutually-constructed systems of power that work coherently as a unit to maintain the status-quo and continue its oppression. The interconnection and intersection of these facets is what I call *La Glorieta.*

The intersectionality within *La Glorieta* is central to an understanding, explication of the process and experiences of subordination. Moreover, La Glorieta also illustrates how processes of subordination disempowered Chicana/Latina students. I have only provided this metaphorical concept to create a mental image of this intersectionality of multiple systems of oppressions and conceptualize the specificity of the oppression as well as the impact in the Chicanas'/Latinas' academic goals and life achievements. I arranged these facets of oppression in a Venn diagram (see Figure 1). The area that overlaps in the center forms a figure of a hexagon. This hexagonal shape at the center of the multiple facets is *La Glorieta*.

Figure 2: *La Glorieta*.

Class

Gender/Sexuality

Language

Race/Ethnicity

Religious Beliefs

Nationality &
legal-status

LA
GLORIETA
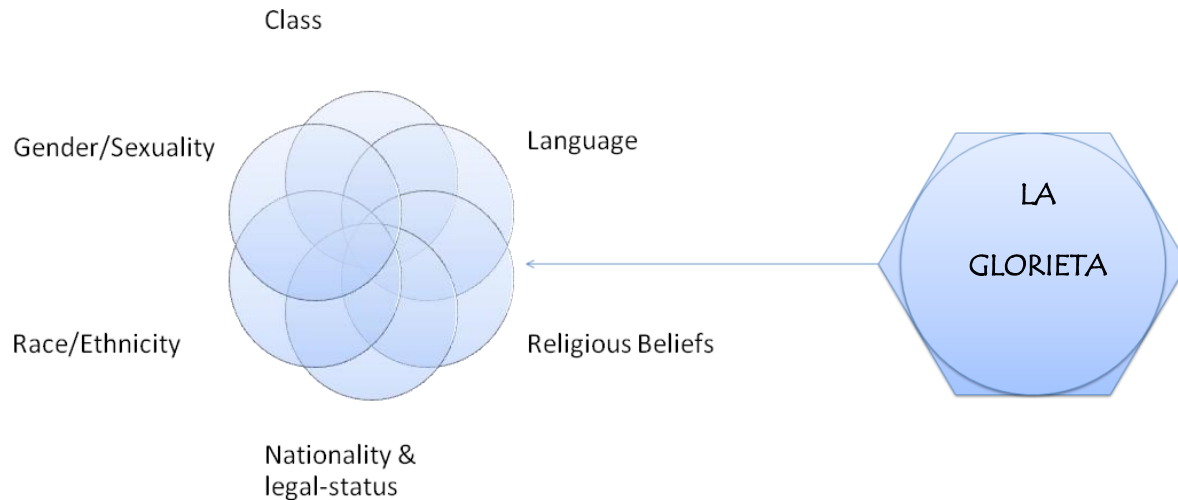
The difference between an actual round-about and *La Glorieta* in this study is that a round-about requires vehicles traversing it to move in a clockwise direction. *La Glorieta*, however, does not rely on movement in any one direction; it is an interactive and dynamic multifaceted process, which represents the unique social experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest. *La Glorieta* is fluid, flexible and, at times, unnerving. These intersectionalities are intertwined and embedded with one another, adding to the complexity of *La Glorieta*.

La Glorieta captures and illuminates the intersectionality of this oppression and ultimately serves as a dynamic apparatus—full of hegemonic ideologies—shaping the construction of Chicana/Latina identities and constraining their bodies, minds, and souls. It is at this *Glorieta* where the Chicanas/Latinas struggle, challenge, and disrupt hegemonic ideologies; it is at this glorieta where they face the *latigazos* [lashes] of the negative representations, perceptions, and stereotypes; it is here where they develop their hybrid identities; it is here, where they shape their Chicana/*Mestiza* consciousness; and it is through this lens that

Chicanas/Latinas view and understand the world. It is their world, their "third space," their "reality" as Isaura claimed.

To visualize the latter, I arrange the participants' stories in six broader sections. Even though I fragment the participants' experiences, their complexity should not be the subject of reductionism. Every *Mestiza* must be understood through the lens of *La Glorieta*, a multifaceted intersectionality of oppressions that serves as a *dynamic apparatus* to construct and constrain Chicanas/Latinas subjectivities.

The Intersection of Race, Class and Legal Status
on Chicanas/Latinas Life Experiences

Seeking a Job and the "American Dream"

I began my interviews with broad questions such as, "Tell me about your childhood and describe the place in which you grew up, including the activities you participated in your community and in school, the types of friends you had, your family employment history, lifestyle, and religion, if any." These open-ended questions were broad enough to allow my participants to take any direction they desired.

As they began their stories, I noticed that most of them introduced their parents and family members as individuals constrained by a capitalist society and focused on the struggles and challenges of their working-class backgrounds. The efforts of survival and overcoming the "curse" of poverty were palpable in their stories. For instance, Isaura explained that her family's reason for moving to Washington State from California was to search for "work" and a great "place to live."   Isaura stated:

I was born in California, near the Bay Area of San Francisco. But, living

expenses were just astronomical—they were too much and my dad was working

in the agriculture … and my mom would work on-and-off seasonally … we just

couldn't afford to live there and, in addition, the community that we could afford

to live in was not the best ... So, at that point in time, my mom talked to her

family here in Washington State, [who mentioned] the apple orchards, there is a

lot of work, [and it] … is a great peaceful place to live,…I had my tenth birthday

here in Washington State.

The job availability and peacefulness of Washington combined to inspire Isaura's family

to make the decision to migrate north. Migrating within the United States or even from Mexico

to the United States in search of job opportunities was a common theme prominent among most

of the participants. Cris, like Isaura, mentioned that "the whole thing about not having money

and also just… having barely the basic things," were the fundamental reasons for her mother

decided to leave her country and come to the United States. Maria's family also relocated from

Mexico to the United States and from California to the state of Washington. She explained that

in Mexico her mother suffered hardships working in the fields and the salary was less than the

minimum wage. Her mother decided to follow her husband who already resided in the United

States. Alma's story is similar to Maria's. Alma's mother, tired of working in the labor force

decided to come to the United States for a better life with her future husband, who was living in

the United States.

Alejandra summarizes the reason for coming to this country by saying that her family

decided to come to the United States in search of the "American Dream, whatever that is." She

clarified by stating that "having a job, an education, opportunities in life, a car, and a house"

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were the motives behind the decision to move to the United States.   The irony lies in the definition of this term. This term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America*, written in 1931. He states:

> The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.

Thus, if the majority of the participants' families were looking for "a job, an education, opportunities in life, a car, and a house," according to the definition of the "American Dream" they were seeking a "land" of freedom where "each man and each woman..[is] able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable."

In other words, these families were searching for freedom to pursue their goals in life through hard work and free choice. Nevertheless, some of them continued living in the shadows due to the absence of economic and educational opportunities, legal status, and sexual, racial and ethnic discrimination. According to my findings, a strong work ethic and these aspirations instilled in most of the participants a great deal of resilience; they were driven by their desire to improve their standard of living and valued hard work, family, and education (Shields & Berman, 2004).

Crossing *Fronteras*

Migrating from Mexico to the United States and from the United States to Mexico was part of life for Cris and Karla, but especially for Maria de Jesus. Maria de Jesus experienced constant relocation not only between these two countries, but also within the United States. She explained:

> In my family there are five girls, my mom, and my dad. Me and my sisters were all born in California. By the time I was eight, we moved to México. We lived there for … two to three years. We went to school there [in México] and then we moved back to the United States. When we got here, we lived about six months in California then my parents started looking for jobs. That's when we came here to Washington State. When we got here, we lived in Sunnyside and Mabton …We lived there for about a year or so … my parents moved to Royal City. We lived there and went to school, and then my parents moved to Othello, and [we were] there for another year and a half, and then we moved to Mattawa. The reason we moved a lot was because of my parents' jobs. It was really hard to stay in one place. Then, after a year or so, we moved back to Othello and that's where we lived for about five years and barely this summer we moved to Quincy. My parents are farmworkers, so … they had to migrate to different places for jobs .... My mom right now is working at a bodega [factory] in Quincy.

The reason for Maria de Jesus moving several times was to follow the seasonal agricultural job. Maria de Jesus stated that "growing up was really hard" because of "moving from one school to another" and "making new friends every single time" was difficult. When her father got injured at a farm in Othello, the family was forced to stay for four years until his

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recuperation. These four years were crucial for Maria de Jesus who expressed happiness about staying at one high school without the pressure to build new relationships or of falling behind on class curriculums.

The crossing of physical borders or *las fronteras* between countries, states, and cities is prominent in each of my participants' life experiences (Anzaldúa, 1999). Alejandra, Cris, Karla, Maria, and Alma crossed the U.S.-Mexico *frontera* and by doing this, underscored the displacement and shifts in identity pertinent to their lives. According to Chicana epistemologies, the participants were then faced with the choice between the English or Spanish language, a traditional Mexican culture or modern gender roles, and Mexican or "American" ethnicity (Anzaldúa, 1999). These are only a few of the dualisms faced by these participants; however, most of them spoke predominantly about facing social injustice within a capitalist and race stratified society. It is interesting to further note that some of these stories had a personal activist component to them. For example, the story of Cris titled "Desire and Resilience for Making a Difference" illustrated the frustration of injustice and the desire to transform and eradicate social and racial injustice for laborers.

Desire and Resilience for Making a Difference

Cris affirmed that the experiences of poverty and injustice at the orchard inspired her to become educated. The following statement reflects her desire to attend an institution of higher learning influenced by the belief that education would open doors to economic prosperity and give her the tools she would need to fight for the rights of farm workers.

I hated working in the fields. During the asparagus season, we had to wake up

early in the morning, go help my parents, [return]…around 7:00 a.m. and get

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ready for school. I just hated it, waking up in the morning and being dirty.

Sometimes it's so windy, it's raining, and you had dirt in your teeth. I just hated

the whole thing about working in the fields. I always thought to myself, if I don't

go to college, I will probably be working here, and I don't want to do that. I also

told my friends, "Oh, I want to go to college, I don't want to be working in the

fields." I saw how hard people worked, and I felt bad for everyone and especially

for my parents, how their job is not appreciated even though they work so hard.

Sometimes, I remember my mom could barely walk and she had to go to work.

The frustration and helplessness were palpable in her body language and spoken words.

These experiences made Cris search for a way to help her community who was operating in a

hegemonic system designed to subjugate them without any outlets to address their grievances.

Attending college was her hope to overcome the working-class condition and escape from the

work of the fields and the "curse of poverty."   The resilience of getting up in the morning to go

to work and returning home to get ready for school are common experiences among these

marginalized families.

Moreover, another experience that influenced her decision to get an education was an

incident she remembered vividly regarding an undocumented farm worker laboring on the same

farm where Cris' family worked. This undocumented worker earned one ticket for each box of

cherries he picked. These tickets were to be exchanged for his pay at the end of the day.

However, when the worker submitted the tickets to the owner, "the owner just got them and

threw them to the floor in his face." Cris continued her story by recalling:

 I was just thinking, "How rude." He worked … I can't forget that. I asked

myself, how can he just throw [the tickets] away? The owner wouldn't pay him

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for what he had worked." I remember that [theworker] just stood there. And I was appalling; I told myself, "You can't do that. How can he just say he's not going to pay him?" And you can see that [the laborer] was like "Well, what can I do?" These experiences made me think about becoming a lawyer, and come back to sue those people that do stuff like that.

As she brought to mind all these images from her life experiences, I detected resentment of the owner's practices. It was evident how frustrated she was as she recalled such discriminatory and unjust acts taking place right before her eyes. This particular experience was engraved in her psyche; Cris internalized it and turned it into a source of strength and courage to continue her education. It was as if she had no other choice but to remove herself from the environment in which she was operating (the orchards) in order to seek new tools that would dismantle the injustices that she was experiencing (Lorde, 1981).

Cris truly believes in the power that could come about as a result of acquiring an education; she realized that learning the way the law system functioned could provide her with the keys to liberating herself and others from the cage of oppression. The latter became her purpose in life. For Cris, it was necessity to continue her education, not only for her own fulfillment, but for a greater good.

However, Cris faced one of her "biggest obstacles" in life within the education system. Tuition has increased rapidly in the past 10 years and her legal status in this country has not granted her the opportunity to apply for student loans. Cris is financing her education by working after school and during summers. But, finding work is another challenge because she is not allowed to work in this country, even thought Cris claimed the United States is the only country she knows.

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The intersection of classism, racism, and constant discrimination or subjugation due to Cris' legal status creates a dynamic system of oppression that is viewed by Cris as mutually exclusive experiences within her own *Glorieta*. This story unveils the intersectionality of hegemonic discursive practices and illuminates the process in which they function as a dynamic apparatus to oppress individual. Moreover, it reveals how vulnerable farm laborers are in the United Stated. Nevertheless, Cris' desire to earn an education must be seen in the light of attempting to alter those conditions which render Chicanos powerless. Education for Cris has been a tool of resistance and opposition, a response to the pervasive structure of control.

Race/Ethnicity and Language: Inescapable Realities in U.S. Schools

"If race wasn't a problem, if being a female wasn't a problem, I think I would be further"

(Mauryn, personal communication January, 25, 2008).

Segregation and Equity in Classrooms

According to CRT and LatCrit, the subordinated and oppressive experiences do not only appear in subordinated jobs, but are also reproduced in classroom discourse as well (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Race/ethnicity, class, and gender are an integral part of the U.S. schooling experience, emerging as the most prominent struggle among all the participants (Bettie, 2003; Ronda & Valencia, 1994; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The participants referred to it repeatedly and the most troubling aspect of their schooling manifested during their high school years. As I asked them to share school, incidents of race/ethnicity, class, and gender discrimination started to emerge.

For Alejandra, a college junior with strong convictions and self-determination, the high school years were the most difficult years of her life. With firmness, Alejandra said, "I hated high school—the four years of high school, I hated them." Shaking her head, she continued, "Very difficult, very difficult 'cause I felt the difference in treatment in schools from my teachers and from my peers, and I will probably say it's from the educational system." She expressed her understanding for separating the non-English-speaking students from the English-speaking students, but asked an important question. "Why were they not providing the same quality of education for each group?"

Listening to Alejandra reminded me of Chapa and Valencia's (1993) argument that "school segregation has been, and continues to be, a major obstacle in the attainment of equal education[al] opportunit[ies] for a substantial proportion of Latino students" (Chapa and Valencia 1993, p. 179; see also Gonzales, 1990; Valencia 1991). Alejandra was not the only participant who pointed out such segregation and unequal treatment within the educational system; these issues were so prominent in my participants' stories.

Like Alejandra, Cris, Mauryn, Maria de Jesus, Karla and Nancy attended segregated schools with poor academic schooling. This segregation was created by the *de-facto* segregation,—self segregation of the population, as a result of the location of the school and make-up of the population, or by *de-jure* segregation—the result of policies devised by school officials. Nevertheless, this segregation resulted in alienating the students according to their race and ethnic background to provide unequal education. This unequal education nurtured an environment where students felt inferior. LatCrit theory unveils the domination and oppression within the hidden agenda by alleging that Chicanas/Latinas are not only effectively kept out of the opportunity structure through segregated and inferior schools, but they commonly become

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the objects of negative stereotypes. These negative stereotypes of inferiority in which

Chicanas/Latinas portrayed are used to justify their subordinated treatment and suggested they

are less deserving of partaking in the dominant society's opportunity structure, hence,

undermining their sense of self-worth. Consequently, the discriminatory practices which

produce a culture of oppression and inequality in several institutions of the dominant society for

Chicana/Latina students are reaffirmed (DeVos & Suárez-Orozco, 1990).

This race oppression was seen not only in the discursive practices of segregation or

unequal education, but as direct and "in your face," according to Mauryn, who allegedly noticed

"how our teacher would treat us differently than 'them'… it is obvious, even as a little kid, it is

real obvious." To prompt a more in-depth explanation of her experiences, Mauryn elaborated in

her story titled "Racial Prejudices Entrenched in Pedagogical Styles."

Racial Prejudices Entrenched in Pedagogical Styles

Mauryn shared her experiences from elementary school regarding constant competition

with classmates to see who would finish the projects or assignments first in class.

If I was the first one … I would be raising my hand and saying "DONE," but

teachers would not believe me, and would tell me to do my assignment again.

But if my neighbor, who happened to be white, finished with the assignment, they

[teachers] would be like "Okay."

Mauryn asked rhetorically "Why did you think I had to do it again?" I had to stop myself

from answering, and she continued, "Why doesn't she [the classmate] had to do it again, you

know what I mean?" Talking to Mauryn made me realize how profound the impact of such

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negative discursive practices, delivered unconsciously or consciously by teachers, affects some Chicanas/Latinas identities. Mauryn continued sharing a similar experience.

Mr. M. would say run the mile, and I would finish before one well-known athletic student, he would force me to run another lap. He would be like "oh no! You could not finish before her." I would question why? And argue that I completed my laps … I would say, "I did a mile, I know I did, I run all the time." But, the instructor will not believe me and would say, "No, because she is fast. Does that mean that I am not because I am a different color, because she is White, and he is White, and I am not? I was really mad because he made me run another lap … I was so pissed, doesn't that make you mad? That would make anybody mad, why does it have to be me …[an] Hispanic…[sic] [who] run again—why did he not make someone else?"

But what infuriated Mauryn was not really the fact that she ran an extra lap, but the fact that "I could not be better than her, I could not be better than the White girl running." Mauryn strongly believed that these experiences were colored by racial prejudice from her elementary teacher and the PE instructor. According to Mauryn, the negative stereotypes and prejudiced attitude of not only these two instructors but other educators affirmed that racism toward Chicana/Latina students is not a remote and unseen hostility.   Moreover, Mauryn was not the only participant who talked about race and racial stereotypes in the educational system. In the story below, Cris shared her school experience and the taboo of racism in the classroom.

[Y]ou could never say that someone was being racist. We were always taught that racism doesn't exist within the school. Any teacher that you would say that to, they would act like you are making a joke and it was just unacceptable. Stuff

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happened for other reasons—not because someone was being racist. I remember

you would always have students who say to you, "Go back to Mexico" and those

usual things. I remember that it was just not nice to hear that from other people.

As a child, you find that really rude, and I am sure right now you would, but I

guess you just can't understand everything.

I asked Cris if the expression "Go back to Mexico" was a form of bullying that she got

from students and she explained. "I had one person say that directly to me, but usually you

would hear it from other people around you, from Caucasian students." On another occasion,

Cris heard a teacher say this same phrase while some students were defending Mexico in a

classroom argument. The nationalistic sentiments of students were prompting them to defend

Mexico in this argument, bringing knowledge of their "home" into the classroom. According to

Cris, this conversation ended with the bold and hurtful statement by the teacher.

These biases or prejudices, perhaps unconsciously help by educators, include the

misperceptions that Chicana/Latina students are not proficient enough to articulate their ideas on

paper. Educators who assumed that "all" Chicana/Latina students were not capable of writing

proficient English papers were revealed in the stories of two of the 10 participants I interviewed.

The following story illustrates how allegations of plagiarism affected the participants.

Plagiarism, Language and Prejudice

Both Mauryn and Isaura, two of my most articulate Latinas, experienced accusations of

plagiarism in their English courses. Mauryn experienced the humiliation of being accused of

plagiarism not only in elementary school, but also in her English 101 course while attending

college. According to Mauryn, her professor could not believe that she could have done well

writing a paper, although she noted having spent two weeks working on it. She took personal

offense when the professor explicitly made the assumption that "coming from ESL courses it is

impossible that you can write this well." Such fallacious assumptions affirmed that the

plagiarism charge was due to her race. Isaura, like Mauryn, was accused of plagiarism in her

senior year in high school. Mauryn shared her experiences with me:

> [During the elementary years,] I got accused of cheating and remember this vivid
>
> because I know I never did it. I do not know why I was accused of cheating, and
>
> it seemed unfair, but I got sent to the corner, and I could not even say why. Why
>
> did you send me to the corner? How do you know I cheated? It was in multiple
>
> tables—it was not even a big test or nothing, it was just a multiple table where
>
> you could just see how much you know of your multiple tables. I went home and I
>
> started crying, I had to tell my mom that I got accused of cheating, and I do not
>
> know why.

Mauryn felt powerless as a kid whose intelligence was being questioned. According to

Mauryn, the teacher questioned her ability to remember her multiplication tables due to

prominent stereotypes in the school regarding "Mexican students not being smart." Mauryn

claims that "teachers believe that you are not smart, because you are Mexican." These

stereotypes and prejudices are rooted in the pedagogical styles of educators. She not only

illustrated examples within the K-12 school system, but also in her university. Mauryn shared

this story:

> Even here [in this university] last quarter, I had an English instructor, Mr. H., I
>
> did a summary paper for English class; I picked to do it on Nuclear Waste. I
>
> knew about the subject because I had studied in high school … he accused me of

plagiarism. He said, "I just read the first paragraph, and I knew you plagiarized."

I felt really offended, I had a works cited page—he could see my primary and

secondary sources.   I thought it was about my paper, but when he asked, "Are

you an ESL student?" He said, "is English your second language?" and I said,

"what does that have to do with it?" He said, "Well ESL students do not do that

well." I was thinking, "What? I can't do a good paper because I'm an ESL

student?" It bugged me a lot.   I cried that whole night. I called my mom and my

friends. I was getting help from one of my friends of UW who was pre-

reviewing my work for me, since I did not know that this university had a writing

center. She would be reading it and be like, "Oh, this does not seem right, or this

is not good." I mean like everybody else, we even did that in class. When I

disclosed this to my professor, he said, "Oh, no, she did it for you." How would

you know that?   She has her own classes, no time, when would she have time to

do my paper? I talked to a counselor about it; I even went to talk to Dr. M. to tell

them about this situation because I was not plagiarizing. They were telling me

that his accusations were not right and wanted to help me. But, I felt like if I

reported him, he would probably give me an F for my class, or I would have to

take the class again. I do not have money to pay this class again. I felt bad for

not doing anything about it *pero*, [but] it was my first quarter here, and I was

scared being in a big school. So, I decided to not report him. He gave me a 3.1 in

the class. It is disturbing, I thought, that this could happen in this institution; I

thought this university was more diverse and more cultural.

Mauryn's story illuminates an intersection of race and language and how these negative perceptions held by some educators operate as obstacles in the academic life of Chicana/Latina students. Educators who practice advocated pedagogical styles rooted in such negative ideologies perpetuate educational inequity through a deficit model (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Mauryn believed that her experience was solely due to race and mentioned that, "I don't think this situation would have been the same if a Caucasian, Japanese, or Chinese. It was because I am Mexican. They [educators] don't think Chinese students plagiarize even though they do. They think that *all* Chinese and Japanese students are intelligent even though some of them could also be in ESL." Mauryn explained that she no longer would sit on the front of a classroom for fear of being stereotyped as an "ESL-Mexican student." Nevertheless, Mauryn repeatedly mentioned that these experiences were giving her strength to complete her undergraduate degree and pursue her master's to "show them that I can do it."

These experiences are obviously detrimental to the psyche of any human being and, despite repeated abuse and humiliation, these participants seem to show a great deal of resilience, taking it upon themselves to prove to others they will succeed academically despite the odds stacked against them. This section illuminates the intersectionality of race and language, colored by nationalist sentiments in which participants of this study negotiate their identity. These facets are interconnected in *La Glorieta,* creating an apparatus of oppression.

Similarly, Chicana/Latina students entered into several situations in which their identities have already been defined negatively by being racialized and gendered along stereotypical lines. In the section below, several participants shared their stories regarding gendered stereotypes.

The Inescapable Stereotypes:

Racialized and Gendered Bodies

Frustration about negative stereotypes existing in the mainstream was prominent in the Chicana/Latina participants' storytelling. Isaura noted that the most prominent stereotype she encountered was the idea that "Mexicans are submissive, shy, and quiet and need to be rescued." Isaura explained,

> For me, what has gotten most in my way is when I'm in class in an unknown environment, I seem really quiet. I'm quiet because I'm observing my surroundings. I'm trying to figure out who is who, what to do, what my place is, what I need to learn, what I need to accomplish. Whereas people right off the bat assume that I'm really shy and submissive and just kind of quiet because I am a brown Latina you know. And there is always like the little pat in the head, "Are you ok? Do you need anything? Do you need us to do anything for you?" I was certain in that class and proud to say I got a 4.0 in it. But you know, I was always kind of quiet, listening, always sitting in the front. But she [the professor] would make an extra effort to just kind of rescue me. I guess you know, give me extra help and be like "Do you understand? Are you ok? Do you want me to explain it in another way?" And I was like, "No, I get it—that is why I am not saying anything, I'm good." So, yea, I think those stereotypes are the most—they get in the way. Because they think I don't know, and I'd start believing it after a while.

What appeared to be genuine and caring actions from Isaura's professor are understood by Isaura as offensive and undermining her intelligence. Assumptions made by the instructor

seemed to be colored by Isaura's race, ethnicity, and perhaps her gender. She also disclosed that

these low expectations become a dangerous hegemonic discourse because "we may start to

believe it after a while." LatCrit theorists concur with Isaura and claimed that these social

reproduction ideologies based in deficit stereotypes are imposed upon the agency of individuals

in this case Chicana/Latina college students, and the danger lies when the students begin to

believe them (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Valencia, 1998;

Valencia & Solórzano, 1998).

However, Isaura is not just passively participating in social reproduction ideologies;

rather, she resisted the oppression of the educational system by constantly disrupting these

hegemonic ideologies. Isaura claimed to get "annoyed" by the work of repeatedly countering

these stereotypes by "consistently having to prove yourself and justify yourself and validate your

stories." She explained,

> [J]ust people not believing you, or people needing you to justify yourself, prove
>
> yourself—I think that's what is difficult. You know, explaining to a person of
>
> privilege or other individuals who don't see things that way you do that there is
>
> injustice, that there is discrimination and although, now-a-days, I believe it's not
>
> as blatantly 'in your face' like cross burning … it's not that way, it's subtle … I
>
> think that is the difficult thing.

Isaura is conscious that while de jure racial discrimination may no longer exist overtly in

the U.S. education system, patterns of racial exclusion continues in a *de facto* state as she

experienced through low expectations and negative perceptions by her teachers. As Isaura

continued explaining her struggles in academia, she also highlighted other perceptions help by

mainstream society such as the need to meet a "diversity quota." In the story below, Isaura explained her fears as a Chicana/Latina in a society where racism and sexism continue to prevail.

Me and the Diversity Quota

> My fear is that throughout my life the work that I do, I want to be in academia; I want to do research in science. That is the path I wanna continue. But I feel like my credibility is forever going to be affected because people are going to feel like I have some sort of unearned privilege because I am brown, female, and I have had all this help.

Isaura further described the perception of the dominant society by stating, "[People tend to think] I am not qualified to do the work I am doing, I don't have the grades, I do not have the background, but, you know, I am here taking the place of someone who is qualified." After I encouraged her to give me a specific example of a situation where she had experienced the diversity quota stereotype, she related the following story. "I told you my experience about … [the] University and, you know, it was a great experience talking to the individuals in the program." Isaura referred to a conversation we'd had in the McNair Scholars Program office when she shared her great news of being accepted into a PhD program in molecular bioscience at a research university.. I nodded, and she continued,

> I told someone close to me. And they were just like, "Yep, you fulfill their diversity requirements." And then I didn't say anything I was just quiet and they were just like, "Oh, that was just a joke, I was totally kidding," and, even if they were, it's a sensitive issue, you know? Like, I've been dealing with that all my life. Having to prove that I'm qualified and that I'm smart … Maybe I am

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hypersensitive, I don't know if that is the thing …You know, I talked to people

about this a few times and I think you get the whole "roll your eyes" attitude. You

know, it is like, "Oh, here we go again—another diversity issue, like it is really

that big of a deal."

Isaura also related the obstacles she faced as a Mexican woman in the story below.

Gender and Racial Stereotypes "Are a Sensitive Issue."

Expressing her irritation with gender role stereotypes, Isaura explained,

[T]here is the whole gender role expectation; there is the Mexican woman

expectation. I guess in my personal experiences, it has come through when

people are surprised by the way I speak, by the way I write. I guess someone that

hadn't had such experiences would be thinking, "Why is that such a big deal?

People compliment you for being such a good writer—shouldn't you be happy?"

But, I think, to us, it is a sensitive issue; it goes deeper than that when people are

continuously complimenting you, as if you have surpassed their low expectations.

I think that is when it gets offensive, you know?

Having educational officials constantly being surprised about her accomplishments was

not encouraging for Isaura, but rather a reality check about people's expectations of

Chicana/Latina students. Mauryn also brought race/ethnicity and gender to the forefront.

Race, Class, and Gender: the Triple Oppression

Mauryn felt that the "triple oppression" was an obstacle to becoming "all you can be …. I

feel that if race was not a problem, if being a female was not a problem, I think I would be

further, be president of the school. I think I could have been much more, but I don't know. I feel that sometimes we get screwed out of the deal because we are Latinas." This feeling of being "screwed out of the deal" for being a Latina was prominent among nearly all my participants. Cris, like Isaura and Mauryn, stated "It's just [that] you're a Latina female and females don't do so well in our society, nor do Latinos, so when you put that together its just—you kind of get the worst. You don't get good treatment… So, being a Latina and being a female, both make my life harder."

Cris' comments remind me of the work of Garcia (1997) who stated, "Chicanas are confronted daily by the limitations of being a woman in this patriarchal [and racial] society (p. 375)."   Segura (1997) claimed that Chicanas "suffer from the 'triple oppression' of race, gender and class that is unique to them as women of color" (p. 111). This triple oppression is explored extensively by Chicana theorists by analyzing the interplay of stratification axes of race, class, and gender within the family, the school, or the labor market. This triple oppression is viewed on *La Glorieta* as interconnected with other facets. Alejandra in the following story expands the constraints of the triple oppression and claimed that it is more than race, class, and gender.

Expanding the "Triple Oppression"

Alejandra began by explaining her perception of people's expectations of the Chicana/Latina, especially Mexican women:

Y la cruel reality was that okay you are Hispanic [sic], you are supposed to behave

this way, you are supposed to wear certain kinds of clothes, you are supposed to

have a boyfriend that looks like a *Cholo*, you are supposed to listen to this type of

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music like Norteño[7] which I don't like, no offense, you are supposed to have

babies in your teen years and you are not supposed to go to college.

Another stereotype about Latinas expressed by Alejandra was:

Yo creo que la gente espera que yo me comporté como ellos piensan, okay es

mujer va a tener cinco hijos [I believe that people expect me to act according to

their stereotypes, as a Mexican female I am expected to have five children].

Being a Mexican female, they are expecting me to be and act in a certain way. I

was impacted by what Selma Hayek mentioned in an interview about Latinas.

She said that when she started her career in Hollywood there was no role model

for Latina females; the roles available were the "housemaids" or the "prostitutes."

That statement impacted me because I begin to notice that it was true. Every time

I was going to see a Latina role in movies, I was mostly seeing the maid … But,

what angered me the most was a time when I was asked if I knew any members of

my family willing to clean a house.

When Alejandra mentioned this, I noted similar experiences and I let her continue.

And that stereotype made me so angry. "Wait a minute, you are asking me

because I am a Mexican, and I may have maids available in my family?" And it

frustrates me when people say, "Oh you can come and clean my house?" To me,

it feels degrading. To me, it feels that well that is the only thing I can do, or I am

only good for that. Maybe they are not saying that with that intention but that is

how I felt. So now when they say that I usually say, "Oh, sure—but it will be

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[7] Norteño (literally meaning "northern" in Spanish; also known as norteña or conjunto) is a genre of Mexican music. The accordion and the bajo sexto are norteño's most characteristic instruments. This genre of music is extremely popular among the Mexican community.

$200 an hour because I am a professional. I have been doing this work since I

was a child, so I have many years of experience. I have a Master's degree in

cleaning the house. I have a Master's degree in cooking, also, if you are willing to

pay for my work." So, I know that when I meet people they do have that idea of

me. You're Mexican and you are going to have five children, and you do not

have a degree, you're not going to be a professional and you are Mexican. That

challenges me to show them that they are wrong … through conversations. I let

them know the importance of education on my life, and the importance to grow. I

also feel that I am an ambassador of my country. I feel that I have to represent

my people, especially Latinas. And as an ambassador I feel responsible to

"educate" people about my community… I asked people why do they think that

U.S. portrayed other countries, not only Mexico, but other countries in a negative

way? I asked to know what they think.

Curious to know what Alejandra, a member of the U.S. Army, thought about this subject, I

interrupted and asked, "What do you think?" She eagerly responded,

I believe that U.S. had the necessity on the 1950s to integrate a strong sentiment about

patriotism. Then it became a habit and they began to compete with the entire world by

making movies that portray these countries in a negative way, showing the best of the

United States.

Alejandra connects the negative stereotypes of Mexicans with the necessity to build a strong

patriotic sentiment within U.S. society. Utilizing Hollywood to represent the "Other" in a

negative light facilitate the construction of the "imaginary community" and reinforcing discourse

of "Us vs. Them."

They do not show discrimination in Hollywood, they don't show how United

States uses cheap labor—they don't show that. When they portray illegal

Mexicans, oh, they are the criminals, but they don't show what they do to them.

They don't show how they used them and abused them, how they treat them in the

fields. So, I feel that mentality that began in the 1950s with the Cold War created

this patriotism and showed that we are Americans. And there is nothing wrong,

like I said, I love development but when it involves diminishing other people and

other countries, not really representing the reality, I am against it.

Alejandra's story not only illustrates the construction of gender and racial stereotypes of

Mexicans, but also connects patriotism with national sentiments about Mexicans working in the

fields. This interconnection of race, class, nationality, and legal status is the lens through which

Alejandra understands these pervasive negative stereotypes of Mexicans—through *La Glorieta*.

According to several other participants, however, *La Glorieta* expands to include another

ideology entrenched within their communities.

The Intersection of Religious Ideologies and Sexuality

Religious Ideologies and Sexuality

Religious ideologies are constantly intertwined with culture. According to Trujillo,

(1997) "most Chicanas/Latinas grow up inculcated with the dichotomy of 'good girl-bad girl'

syndrome."   The "bad-girl" is a promiscuous teen having sex before marriage (Trujillo, 1997),

which is often strictly prohibit by Chicano parents. This cultural ideology within the Chicano

community "refuses to acknowledge the possibility that young women may be sexually active

before marriage (p. 285)" relying only on the word of the Bible—abstinence.

Nevertheless, Mauryn, Cris, Karla, and Alma mentioned that teen pregnancy was an issue among Latinas in their particular high schools and thus created a stigma for every Mexican teen at the school. Cris said that in her high school "people always see us as the potential [candidate] to get married or get pregnant." These stereotypes resonated with Mauryn's own experiences when she stated that:

> If you were Mexican, you were pregnant. I was pissed that people would think so low of us. During my senior year, there were a few people that were pregnant, but why is that the Latino's fault? Why do people have to look at us like no matter what, you are poor if you're Mexican and you will get pregnant during school if you are a Mexican female?

The premise for this argument is, why is the Chicana/Latina to blame? In other words, the Chicana/Latina gets scrutinized again while the capitalist, patriarchal, and racial *modus operandi* of the society is overlooked. Alma, who worked as an assistant for a teen parent program during high school alleged that,

> I would talk to my mom because I would get frustrated [seeing young Latinas getting pregnant], she would tell me, the only difference on why they said that Mexican women get pregnant a lot is 'cause we are the only ones that have the balls to actually go through the pregnancy. Cause if you see a high school White girl, they would get an abortion and not think twice about it. But a Mexican girl cannot do that because if they are really religious they disapprove of abortion and adoption is not [an] option either."

Alma's mother echoed Bettie's statement in her book *Women Without Class*: "Stories of abortion were almost nonexistent among Mexican American girls …. While middle-class

performers were more likely … to have abortions if they became pregnant as a way of ensuring the life stages that they and their parents had in mind for them" (p. 68). Bettie added that it is the lack of resources that prevent Mexican Americans to afford such an expensive procedure. I argue that apart from the low socio economic background of a Chicana/Latina, we must include the cultural and religious ideologies within Chicano communities in order to understand the reason for widespread opposition to abortion.

Chicana feminists such as Anna NietoGomez, Bernice Rincón, and Mirta Vidal have articulated that, "most Chicanas are brought up in Catholic families, and thus have to cope with an especially reactionary morality which rationalizes the subordination of women in the family and in society, including structures that work against the right of women to control their own bodies, the right to abortion and contraception" (Vidal, 1997, p. 21). These entrenched and interlinked ideologies within society influence the decision of any Chicana/Latina regarding abortion.

Alma mentioned the majority of the Chicana/Latina teen parents coming through her program kept their babies. She explained,

And there was only one incident where the girl gave up her baby and it was never a Hispanic [sic] girl … they have the guts to go on with their pregnancy, you know. It's not easy, at least from what I saw, from my close friends walking around school with a belly, you know. You are talked about, rumors spread. Everybody looks at you like "you are some weird kid—what are you doing here?"… they had the guts to go on with their pregnancy and still go to school and be responsible for the baby afterwards.

Later in the interview, Alma expressed her frustration—not about pregnancies, but about gender inequalities.

> To me, it makes me angry because it is only the female who is worried about getting pregnant. The guy, if he wants to sleep with somebody, he would sleep with them and it's done. They are not the ones who have to carry the baby; they don't even have to associate themselves with it. To me that is a little hard, because you should have guys being educated. They should worry, like, "hey, I'm gonna have to take care of my kid," you know? And the parenting does not start when the baby is born, it starts way before. And some people don't get that.

Alma also pointed out an important concept within the traditional Chicano culture, which is the preservation of females as pure and virginal until the altar, and highly valued by the majority of Chicano/Latino parents (Vidal, 1997). This means that Chicanas/Latinas face the pressure to remain a virgin until "walking down the aisle," if not, they are constantly reminded by religious family members and/or male-chauvinist individuals within their communities of their inferiority and their devaluation as females. In other words, by not following the sexual abstinence beliefs, which are derived from religious ideologies, females are criticized and believed to be undeserving of marriage because she would not be a good wife, by their parents and community.

Nieto (1975), who constantly wrote in opposition to the "ideal Chicana" created by Chicanos during the Chicano movement, claimed that "some Chicanas are praised as they emulate the sanctified example set by [the Virgin] Mary" which she believed is not only inadequate, but crippling. To understand Nieto's argument it is important to conceptualize *Marianismo*.

Marianismo, which comes from the name of the Virgin Mary or Maria, is the submissive and obedient female character which reinforces the traditional role of a wife bestowed upon the Latina (Gil et al., 1996). In essence, *marianismo* is the female counterpart to *machismo.* Coming from Catholicism, Marianismo is the ideology of true femininity that Chicanas/Latinas are supposed to live up to: being modest, virtuous, and sexually abstinent until marriage and, after marriage, Chicanas/Latinas are supposed to be faithful and subordinate to their husband in addition to having as many children as God permits. There is power in marianismo that stems from the female ability to produce life (Gil et al., 1996). Additionally, women who live up to this ideal are usually praised for their docility, and submissiveness.

However, as Alma suggested the contrary is encouraged in males. The macho concept within the Chicano community includes not being a virgin at marriage and is inculcated in a male child from a very early age. Although, for decades these ideologies of *marianismo* and *machismo* have been challenged by several Chicana scholars and Chicana activists, they still appear as the stereotype of Chicanas.

On the other hand, in the dominant U.S. cultures, especially in mainstream Hollywood Latinas are portrait as "exotic" bodies, according to Isaura. Isaura mentioned "that we are submissive, we are exotic, [we both laugh] and we are some steamy sexual Latina—the long dark hair." There, she stopped, realizing that it was no longer funny, and stated,

> That is incredibly offensive. I think there is a misrepresentation of our culture
> where you know, you have the traditional paradigm from the *outsiders*. That will
> be, the man is the macho, he is superior to the female and the woman submissive
> and she has no role in the family. I think that has been the interpretation of the
> outside and I think it is inaccurate. I think you're always gonna have your

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circumstances and your specific situations. But, I think that women in our culture

are a lot more valuable and play much more important role than an outsider may

be able to interpret. So I think that submissive, cleaning, baby-having, cook is

very offensive.

In the course of our interview, Isaura countered several stereotypes regarding the

traditional Mexican family, which is also an argument made by several Chicana feminists who

claim that these stereotypical statements are static in historical times and do not acknowledge

progress within the Chicano community.

Although, Isaura countered the stereotypes of *machismo* and *marianismo*, she

problematized religious ideologies in her story titled "Disrupting Religious Ideologies."

However, before sharing her story it is important to analyze the role of religion in the lives of the

participants.

Religion in the Lives of Chicana/Latina Students

The participants of this study are almost all what Isaura calls "traditional Catholics,"

however, there are a few, including Alma and Laura, who are "practicing Catholics." Similarly,

there are few, like Isaura who reject hegemonic religious ideologies or refuse to practice

Catholicism because she does not agree with the institutionalized religious practices.

Nevertheless, Catholicism plays an important role in their lives, communities, and social settings.

For example, it is important to emphasize the presence of religious beliefs embedded in the

participants' language. Unconsciously or consciously, a common expression, "*si Dios quiere*,"

means "if it's God's will," was prominent in the majority of my participants, often ending their

sentences with "*si Dios quiere.*"   This expression is evidence of how culture and religion are so

intertwined in some communities that it naturally emerges in their spoken words, influencing their ideological view of the world. For instance, Laura mentioned "*si Dios quiere, ire a graduate school …*" [If it's God's will, I will go to graduate school]. These expressions were common when they switched to Spanish. Any similar sentiments were not apparent when the participants expressed themselves in English. Interestingly, even without a direct question in my interview to prompt them, three participants brought the concept of religion forward, and I felt compelled to ask them to elaborate on how religion played role in their lives.

For example, Alma identified herself as a Mexican whose,

> "Religion is a big factor in my family. Therefore, culture and religion have always been highly [regarded] in my life. So it is pretty much from the values that my mom has given us, you know? So, it's following the Roman Catholic [traditions], pray, and do this and that—you know the whole presumption, which you are not allowed to go to parties and stuff like that."

Alma defined Catholicism as an intersection of both religious and cultural practices. Concurring with this statement, Anzaldúa and Sanchez (1990) stated that Chicanas' and Latinas' gendered socialization is being influenced by religion generally, and Catholicism, specifically, and as occurring in the family, is a "primary institution for socialization" (Sanchez, 1990, p. 21). Like Alma, Laura's religion played a salient role in her life, especially during her college years. At the time of the interview, Laura was enrolled in a Bible study group and traveled four hours to participate in church-related events on the weekends.

Disrupting Religious Ideologies

Contrary to Alma and Laura, Isaura mentioned that religion was important at one point in her life, but now, she felt disappointed—particularly in institutionalized religion. The disappointment and critical analysis of her religion was evident in her story below:

> Technically, I grew up in California. At this point of time, like the gang stage, I was aware that we were Catholic, I was aware there is church because we'd go to *bautizos* [baptisms] and weddings and staff like that. But we didn't go to church regularly. We moved here, and my dad—I am not going to say that he is a re-born Catholic because he was always a Catholic—but he just became a practicing Catholic, very devout, church-going, always Catholic. And I am 10 years old and at that point my dad brings me with him. I found a niche there. I started getting really into the Bible, really spiritual, really believing in the religion. Just being completely submerged into it, I mean that is what I did in school and after school. I would facilitate religious focus groups and stuff like that for younger students. So anyways, to make the story short, I became totally passionate about it to the point that I wanted to absorb it all, you know? I wanted to have that spiritual connection to God. At that point in time, I think that the strange philosophical question comes up of what role does the priest play? And I think that my natural ambitious nature came up for the first time and I was, "Well, who is the figure head in the church? Who do we listen to every day and why are we listening to him?" Essentially, I came to the conclusion that, as Catholics, we need a mentor, we need a liaison, someone that had a special connection with God right? That is why we need this priest to do the sacraments, to do the confession, whatever. And that is why we go to church, which is why we do not stay in our homes on

Sunday and do it ourselves. So, I wanted that connection. I wanted to have that

sort of spiritual connection; I wanted to be the mentor to people, I guess. I was

around eleven at the time. I knew I didn't want to be a nun. I was just like, I

mean, they are cool, but I wanted to be a priest and I knew I could not be a priest,

obviously, because I am a woman. I am a female. My reasoning kind of went

something like this, well is it's not a physical connection that I have with God,

God is not a human, it has to be a spiritual connection right? I think it is a safe

assumption to make. Does the spirit have a sex, a gender? I don't think so. So if

that is the case, why is my physical vagina, my form here at earth, having spiritual

implications? Why can't I have access to that relationship? So I kinda brought

that question up and essentially the answer was "well that is how things are.

Traditionally that is how it is and you have to have faith. You have to have faith

and this is the right thing and you can't change things." I was just like, "Well that

is convenient"— everything started to seem very conspicuous, like even the

concept of faith, the concept of humility, the concept of like "the last will be

first," you know? You have to be humble—you can't be proud, so I was like,

"Who are we benefiting with these values and these rules? Who is the

beneficiary?" In a way, I thought about it like my agricultural slave-like working

Dad, who has to be humble, you know? I think it makes the existence of people

so much easier, you know? If you think "Well, my life sucks up here but in

heaven I will be first because I am working like a slave and I have nothing. I

think that gives your life some viability. And I felt like, I don't know,

disillusioned. Really disillusioned after a while, so… at one point in time I was

like, "Oh, I quit."

After a couple of laughs, I reflect on Isaura's life experiences and her critical

consciousness regarding every topic of the interview. I realize that the Catholic Church is

particularly problematic for Isaura and for other feminists, particularly Chicana feminists,

because it perpetuates distinctly gendered repression, and it indoctrinates young girls, such as

Isaura, into their limited roles as Catholic women, marginalizing them from participation in

church hierarchy. But, more importantly, these ideologies are disseminated to other gender roles

within the household and other social locations where Latinas reside.

Isaura also problematized social class beliefs within the Catholic Church as she

questioned the concept of humility and her father's humbleness as he performs a "slave-like"

job. Race is less apparent but not absent.   The misrepresentation of Jesus' appearance was an

issue not only for Isaura, but for Cris as well, who claimed that Jesus was not blond and blue-

eyed, but Semitic in appearance.

These disconnect between identity and religion prompted some Latinas to identify

themselves with Our Lady of Guadalupe, also called the Virgin of Guadalupe [*Virgen de

Guadalupe*]. This Roman Catholic icon is the Mexican's most beloved religious and cultural

image. Due to her brown skin, she is also known as "*La Virgen Morena*" [the brown-skinned

Virgin]. She is seen as the mediator between the "Spanish and the Indian cultures, the Chicanos

and the white world, and the human and the divine" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 30). Similarly,

Anzaldúa alleged that like the Virgin Mary, *Virgen Guadalupe* represents the pure female and

embodies the options of nun, mother, and the "good women" in the Chicano culture.

However, Isaura was careful not to generalize as she criticized the Roman Catholic religion, stating that she has a strong connection and admiration for her father, who is a practicing Roman Catholic. She described him as "incredibly open-minded" and affirmed that although "he is a practicing Roman Catholic," he is progressive in his thinking about issues of "intellectual freedom and gender roles." To emphasize the connection between she and her dad, she concluded that "I even go to church sometimes to make my dad happy, you know? I am not big on institutionalized religions. I am being honest theoretically, and it is contradictory because like I said, we should be ourselves, we should do what we want to do…I do not live in a vacuum."

Like Isaura, there were several other participants that questioned the role of religion and believed that it was utilized as a mechanism to continue oppressing Chicanas/Latinas. These religious ideologies not only prevent the fulfillment of Chicanas/Latinas person-hood, but "cripple" them (Garcia, 1997).

This section illustrates how gender roles and sexuality intersects with religious ideologies within a class- and race-stratified society, creating an inequitable environment for Chicanas/Latinas to navigate *La Glorieta*. I also explored another form of subjugation faced by Chicana/Latina students within the educational system—language deprivation, adding one more facet to the intersectionality illustrated in *La Glorieta*.

Obviously, the stories provided by all the participants are highly interrelated. The overlapping nature of the storytelling and the sections in this chapter are evident of the intersectionality of race, class, sex, nationality, language, and religious ideologies, *La Glorieta* space. Not only does some content overlap into other stories, but the sections are interconnected

in such a way that it creates a much fuller picture of the experiences of the Chicana/Latina participants.

Deslenguadas: Barreras del Lenguaje [Without-Tongue: Language Barriers]

Deslenguadas. Somos los del español deficiente. We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic mestizaje, the subject of your burla [mockery].

(Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 80)

In the previous quotation, the word *deslenguadas* has a literal translation as 'un-tongued,' 'de-tongued,' or 'without-tongue'; however, its connotation conveys the violence of linguistic terrorism and the physical epistemic violence through the literal and figurative meanings of the word *lengua* (tongue). Anzaldúa (1999) eloquently described the internal feelings of many Latinos and Latina English language learners (ELL) by providing the concept of *deslenguados*. Nancy, an extraordinary first-generation college student who moved from California to Washington when she was 6 years old became *deslenguada*. Nancy shared her story below.

Deslenguada, I am

I remember it was totally different because I did not know a word of English and even though I knew how to read, even though I knew how to add and how to subtract and do everything and I knew all the colors, but I knew them in Spanish. So the teacher noticed that I was pretty smart, that I was bright, so she gave me an IQ test in English and I didn't do well ….

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Nancy's description of her teacher illustrates that there was a support system in school. However, the fact that she was asked to take the IQ test and in a language that Nancy did not understood is something to ponder. According to Blanton (2003), "testing arose out of the fears that white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant members of the middle class had about the arrival of 'new' immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, who were believed to represent a dangerous ethnic addition to American life" (p. 41). It was in 1916 that Stanford University scholar Lewis Terman broadened the Intelligence test, created by European Alfred Binet-Simon, to measure mental incompetency, or "feeble-mindedness," with the purpose to determine when an individual needed institutionalization by the state. Terman, according to Blanton (2003), "attempted this ambitious undertaking by calculating the Binet-Simon 'mental age' and then dividing that figure by a person's chronological age. The resulting figure was what he called the 'intelligence quotient,' or IQ" (p. 42). Blanton (2003) also alleged that this IQ test was used specifically to "justify the racial segregation of Mexican-American schools on the pedagogical grounds of low educability" (p. 45). With all this information running through my mind, I continue listening to Nancy's story.

 During that time, you couldn't speak Spanish. So if we spoke Spanish we had to

go to the corner or we got in trouble. So I used to be, you know, easy-going,

happy, talkative, and friendly, but when you are in school and you can't talk

because the only language you know, you would get in trouble, I became really

shy. I stopped speaking period because I would get in trouble. I remember at our

classroom there was this corner with a yellow chair and every morning when we

spoke Spanish and the teacher heard you we gotta go there. So you learn not to

speak Spanish. So, pretty much, I knew how to read, how to add, but I knew it in

Spanish so I was behind everybody [even though] those kids were playing blocks, you know.

Nancy undoubtedly experienced the violence of linguistic terrorism that Anzaldúa described. The fact that she was not allowed to speak her native language forced her to mute her voice, suppressing her thoughts and devaluing her knowledge.

In the 1980s, 'English Only' laws were passed across the country, for the most part in states with large Spanish-speaking populations. California voters passed Proposition 63, in 1986 and in the November 1988, elections Colorado, Arizona and Florida passed measures making English the official state language. Even though, in Washington, the legislature never passed any proposition, its impact felt around the nation as Nancy mentioned. California Proposition brought languages into public parlance, allowing the opportunity to recognize the negative ideologies of language in this country.

In My Language I Am Smart

Nancy's experiences reminded me of "*In My Language I am Smart: The Immigrant Song,*" an audio-art piece by Dragan Todorović, which eloquently described the struggles of navigating through the ocean of language and the struggles that individuals who experienced this type of oppression have to overcome.

I am sailing across the ocean of Language. I have no radio, radios do not work here, you can only receive, you cannot send. A flotilla of words from my languages has followed me for the first two hundred miles then we reach the channel of future tense they wave and turn back to our old shore of past participle. The water below my boat … it must be the ocean of language. Day three, the

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clauses gathering in the horizon front the early morning ... they took the shape of

a literature magazine, and I recognized that. It was the murder storm of difficult

sentences. It rapidly rip-up into fractions of post, post, post, modernism. I lie

down waiting to die and said, IN MY LANGUAGE I AM SMART. Maybe that is

what saves me, every time a difficult sentence comes your way, lie down and

pretend you are dead ….

Nancy, as Todorović suggested, lay down and pretended she was dead—she stopped

speaking, she muted her voice and prevented any movement from her tongue. This did not mean

she was not smart. Nancy mentioned, "I was scared to speak Spanish. That is what I remember."

She also recalled being ashamed of speaking words in English that would make her sound dumb

or "stupid." Although she was just avoiding embarrassment, and escaping from the feeling of

unintelligence by staying silent, the internalization of such oppression created contradictions in

her mind because she knew she "was smart."

Unavoidably, one has to go through a mutation that is both excruciating and desirable–

desirable only for that individual's survival. Suddenly, Nancy realized how, during the process

of learning the English language, she had lost part of her authenticity, "I used to be, you know,

easy going happy, talking, talkative, and friendly, but, … I became really shy." Nancy's

experiences were reiterated by many of my participants. "Becoming shy" or "feeling

embarrassed to speak" or "being conscious on how to pronounce words" as well as "not being

able to express properly and being taken as an ignorant person" were among the many responses

I received from my participants. These discursive practices and systematic forms of not only

devaluing the Spanish language, but also advancing the perspective of the Spanish language as

deficient, instead of being considered as a strength, clearly impacts Latina identity.

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Laura was a very positive and upbeat person with few negative things to say about anyone or anything. She related glowing experiences from her elementary and high school years and talked at great length about how she enjoyed school and enjoyed learning. Nevertheless, her self-esteem was shaken during the early years of her education in the U.S.:

> [S]omething big that stands out for me is my experience starting school cause the
>
> first three years were the hardest, just because there were no ways of me
>
> communicating with my teachers, and so I had to use the mediators of anybody
>
> who spoke Spanish and English for me to communicate with my teachers and
>
> peers … it was intimidating just because, from my view, everybody was smarter,
>
> everybody knew what was going on and I needed extra help-someone to tell me
>
> again, you know? I started off just in a way that makes me feel less smart … I
>
> remember being embarrassed.

Unfortunately, like Laura, the majority of the participants including myself, internalized the feeling of inferiority, creating low self-esteem and a constant battle in our conscious. Even though Nancy and Laura eventually enjoyed great academic achievements, the difference between their experiences while learning English was that Nancy had no doubt about her abilities and intelligence, while Laura felt "less smart." Nancy claimed she had positive re-enforcement regarding her intelligence at home. Laura did not mention such experiences; however, she said her family was supportive about her education. Later in the interview, Laura disclosed her disappointment with remedial schooling, particularly the ESL class. Her story is below.

English as a Second Language is a Joke!

I was placed in ESL [English as a Second Language], you know how they pulled you out of the class, and you work with other students who are struggling with the language? I remember reading and stuff. I don't remember it being very helpful cause it was a lot of goofing off all the time, I think. Yea, I don't remember it being helpful at all, I remember just reading, maybe reading in Spanish and being tested. Tested in Spanish words and stuff like that or Spanish and English, I don't remember, but I don't remember being very helpful.

Alejandra's experience with the educational system echoed Laura's when she expressed that "[a]s ESL students, as minorities, as a different group, we were not taken care of academically. We were not. I felt I was not important." Alejandra stated that while she understood the reason behind separating the non-English-speaking students from the English-speakers and placing them into a different classroom, she could not understand why they were not provided with the same quality of education. Her frustration and disappointment were clearly expressed in the following statement:

I felt that we were not taken seriously, they didn't see our capacity, I felt that I was treated like, "Ok, well let's just hire anybody to be a teacher to teach them whatever the teacher wants"… In high school, I had a teacher … he would sleep in the class … right there in front of us. He would sit on his stool and fall asleep, so that gave me a feeling that I was not important that I was just getting the leftovers of education that they were not taking care of me as a student …. I was supposed to get a better education, but I was not getting it. I had another teacher, but I do not remember what her class was about—you can tell that it was an interesting class [she laughed sarcastically].   She would read magazines or fix her

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nails in the classroom, and we would just do whatever we wanted to do, whatever.

It was just a joke. I do not think this is fair … these are just examples that I

experienced all through high school.

This type of language education program promotes dissonant acculturation with negative

consequences that can far exceed the alleged benefits of quickly learning English. CRT/LatCrit

examines racial inequities in educational achievement in a more critical framework by centering

the discussion within the context of racism.

Like Alejandra, Latino critical scholars eloquently articulated that school systems often

deny Latina/Latino students the opportunities for meaningful educational and social

development, thereby affecting their cognitive development and self-esteem (Perez & DeLaRosa

Salazar, 1993; Ronda & Valencia, 1994; Trueba, 1991). Alejandra concluded that due to her

race/ethnicity and language background, she experienced this inequality of schooling. Again, the

frustration and resentment of this participant was evident in her statement:

I felt I was not important … some of those classrooms were very dirty, some of

those classrooms were in disarray and for me to go in a classroom like that, I felt I

was worth less than any other student who went to a better classroom. I always

asked myself why this division? During those four years, I also encountered a lot

of racism, a lot of stereotypes. [I] encountered a lot of, well, my eyes were opened

to a different world.

I did not ask Alejandra to describe this "different world" more in-depth due to time constraints;

however, Alejandra articulated her disappointment with the educational system quite clearly.

The stories in this study clearly illustrate that English as Second Language students are racially

segregated and provided with low academic resources that hinder their educational advancement

hence affecting negatively the quality of education for these participants. It is crucial to understand that ESL usually refers to developmental-level instruction in English language skills for non-native speakers. Although students in these programs often have moderate to high literacy levels in their native language, they are not as competent in English. Meanwhile, special education is instruction that is modified or particularized for those students with special needs, such as learning difficulties, mental health problems, or physical or developmental disabilities. ESL and special education are, in many schools, viewed as similar programs because the students are placed into these classes according to the funding available for each of these programs, instead of the actual need of the students. Isaura and Cris addressed the stigma of ESL in the section below.

The Stigma of ESL

According to Isaura, "ESL is a different issue, not that it is a bad thing, but I didn't need to be there, you know." Even though Isaura asserted that ESL "is not a bad thing," she was certain she did not need the program because "I can spell, I can write, I know how to do math." Isaura explained the reason for placing her in the ESL:

In California, I was actually in a program for gifted children in fourth grade and when we moved over here [to the state of Washington], for whatever reason they put me in ESL classes, just because of my last name. So that is another huge thing that was just not appropriate and, I mean, that has to screw up your ego, you know? I remember my teacher at the time … we started to do math, and I was doing really good on the math. I was doing better than the regular students. She [the teacher] was just like totally impressed that I was so good at math, you

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know? And, I'd do just well, I was doing like sixth grade math at the time, and I was in fourth grade. She was like, "Oh, never-mind. I guess we are going to put you with the normal kids." And then I switched school districts. I went to the middle school and, once again, they put me in ESL even though I was born here and I have always been here. I was excelled; I was in gifted programs in California. So they put me in ESL again with, like, some of the students [who] didn't speak a word of English, you know, so that was really frustrating, just having to sit there and having to be like "Hey listen, I can speak English academically better than I can Spanish."

Isaura touched on an important point that needs to be analyzed further. She claimed, "I go from a place where they have completely high expectations, where I'm in a gifted program in California, and I come to a place where they pretty much have low expectations." Critical theorists explored the low and high expectations among educators and how these affect students of color. For instance, Blote (1995) found that students for whom teachers held high expectations and were treated as high achievers reported higher academic self-concepts than students whose teachers held low expectations and were treated as low achievers. Similarly, Chen and Thompson (2003) demonstrated that teachers' academic feedback to students were particularly reflective of teachers' expectations for student achievement.

As a result, students for whom teachers held high expectations perceived less negative and more positive oral feedback from teachers and this correlated with high self-concept ratings. These critical studies show that as children mature cognitively and become accustomed to teacher feedback mechanisms and classroom conditions, they become more adept at discriminating teachers' expectations and interpreting teachers' differential treatment.

Consequently, students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations may affect their concept of their own ability and in turn create a related achievement outcome. Cris also explained negative perceptions of the ESL program.

> In fifth grade they transferred me back to the regular classes and there's always
> been a whole stigma … the people in those classes is viewed as lower. When I
> went back to the only-English-speaking classes they sort of looked down on me,
> *the students and teachers*. They think you do not know anything because you are
> coming from those classes. They just do not take you seriously.

Some very interesting accounts of critical education are included here, but they reveal only a tiny fraction of what is going on in the day-to-day operations in ESL classrooms throughout the U.S. education system.

The criticism of these Chicanas/Latinas regarding the ESL programs in Washington State was symptomatic of their dissatisfaction with the educational system at large. As they reflected on their high school years, it was apparent that the ESL classrooms were not helpful for their academic growth; in fact, these programs ended up being counterproductive and, not only inflicted psychological wounds that will heal only with great difficulty, but failed to teach them the necessary skills to excel in their academic endeavors.

On the other hand, unlike Alejandra, Isaura, Cris, and Nancy, Maria had a great experience while learning English in school. Maria went through a bilingual program in the state of California, instead of the ESL, and she explained her experiences.

> I went through a bilingual program, I was taught to write and read in Spanish and
> English when I was little, most of my teachers were Spanish-speaking teachers.
> So I really didn't have a hard time in school. English, I picked up pretty fast and

in that sense, I think I was a bit lucky because I talked to people who went

through ESL or English immersion programs and it was harder for them. In a

bilingual program they are using both languages, they teach you your native

language in terms of reading, writing and comprehension and whatnot.   And they

slowly introduce English or they introduce English while you are being taught in

your native language.

Latino critical theorist Lilia Fernández (2002) provided a similar story of Pablo in her

article titled "Telling stories about school: Using critical race and Latino critical theories to

document Latina/Latino education and resistance." Pablo, a high school student in Chicago,

explained that he had a positive experience in a good bilingual education program and was able

to learn English fairly quickly. However, once he entered high school and was sent to ESL

classes his experience changed. Pablo said, "My first 2 years [were] pretty bad because I was in

ESL actually . . . I was learning English . . . Being in the ESL class, it kind of isolates you a little

bit . . . [In] a certain way, they lower your level, or expectations, the teacher does" (p. 51).

According to Cris, the negative connotation of ESL classes transmitted and disseminated a

negative stereotype about the academic abilities of ESL students. Students attending this

program would internalize this negative stereotype and perform accordingly. Like Pablo, Cris

also mentioned that some teachers were "not happy in their jobs" and "mad all the time." For

instance, in the story below, Cris explained one particular incident with a Caucasian Spanish

teacher who disagreed with his own students about language.

Hybrid Language-Chicana/o Style

Cris began sharing her story:

He would always say that he just hated teaching. You could also get that feeling

from him.   He was just …. I don't know. One time he told us that we were his

abstinence. That's why he didn't have kids. People would argue with him

because of the way he was. I remember one time someone asked him to write a

recommendation letter and he said "no" that he wouldn't and he didn't. I

remember that people would always get him kind of mad. They knew that. I

don't understand why he would like to fight and argue with students. He would

kind of like come down to our level. He hated when we used *lonche* [lunch], *brey*

[lunch break] and like those things. Words that your parents use also, so when we

write our papers and use those words … he would say, "This is not a word and

where did you get this from?" And people would just be like, "No, yes, it is a

word!" But he would take it so seriously and to me it was funny because I thought

he was kind of funny and weird. Why is he arguing with students?

The use of words such as *lonche*, *brey*, *brekas*,[car's break] *parkeadero* [parking space] and even

trokas[trucks] are a mixture of English and Spanish, otherwise known as Spanglish. This

Chicano/a language is a linguistic *mestizaje*, the language of the border that transgresses the

boundaries between Spanish and English, high and low decorum, insider and outsider speech

(see Anzaldúa 1999, p. 25). Spanglish is often looked down upon as Cris described with her

Spanish teacher who views the hybrid language as a mutilation of Spanish and of Castellano.

Castellano is the language of Spain, which is quite different from the Spanish of Latin America.

The Castellano language was modified as it mixed with indigenous dialects to produce the

current language spoken in Latin American. Cris' teacher was teaching what he considered

proper Spanish and what so many language scholars considered the official Spanish language.

Like Spanish from Latin America, the Chicana/o language emerged from the mix of Spanish and English. According to Anzaldúa (1999), Chicano Spanish is "a border tongue which developed naturally, … *un language que corresponde a un modo de vivir* [a language that corresponds to a form of living]" (p. 77). Chicano Spanish also has its own "*reglas de academia*" (p.76; see Herrera-Sobek 2006, p. 268-69) and is the only "forked tongue" (p. 77) able to render the multiplicity of the Chicana/o experience since language is tied to culture and one's sense of self (p. 81).

As Cris' classmates attempted to legitimize a language that reflected their life experiences, it turns out that this Chicana/o language enriched not only the English language, but made a major contribution to several academic fields of study, thus participating in the redefinition of humanities scholarship in more interdisciplinary and intersectional ways. For instance, Cisneros (1999) defied notions of non-standard language and asserted herself not as Mexican nor American but as a Chicana woman who wrote,

for a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the

first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning

tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with

either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is

left to them 'but to create their own language?'(Cisneros, 1991, p. 125)

Anzaldúa (1999) illustrated the character of Chicano Spanish as a border tongue, and also spoke to the fact that language and identity cannot be easily separated from each other. She claimed, "Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (p. 81). Chicana theorist posed that being able to freely switch between English and Spanish and sometimes creating or inventing new words and taking control of their language, instills the

power to oppose and resist the dominant discourses that oppress Chicanas and Chicanos and prevent them from freely expressing their lived experiences in the way they know best. Command of this hybrid language also allows them to challenge phallogocentric Spanish and English phrases that have traditionally inscribed women with a third-class status, hence liberating Chicanas/Latinas from literal oppression they have been under for generations. Their "code switching" (Zentella, 1997) is a way to reclaim both worlds and resist giving up one for the other (p.114).

In other words, not being able to find an appropriate language to name their own experiences and/or by diminishing the language they use results in a devaluation of experiences. Consequently, individuals become invisible, absent, invalid, and marginalized within the dominant discourse. Thus, by diminishing a language, one is denying the experiences and existence of an individual and her world. Subsequently, students of color begin rejecting their values, culture, and traditions and ultimately discard their membership in society. They became the *Other*. Subsequently, to become part of dominant society in the United States citizenship and nationality are vital to becoming part of the "Us" equation instead of "Them." In the following section, I explore the intersection of nationality, legal status, and race, this illuminating the construction of the Othering discourse.

Dilemmas of Race/Ethnicity, Language, Nationality, and Legal Status
Troubling Latinas Peace of Mind

As the immigration debates continue to resonate throughout the United States, discrimination issues arise in classroom settings. For instance, Cris, during her high school

years, encountered prejudiced comments from teachers who opposed immigration reform and/or the Mexican way of life. "[W]hen you get in[to] arguments with teachers and when you try to defend Mexico like that they also say, 'Well why you aren't there?' and 'Why are you here?'" Surprised at what I was hearing, I asked, "Teachers would say that?" Cris nodded her head affirmed, "Yeah, I think we have this urge to defend Mexico." She paused for a second or two looking for words to complete her thoughts. These insensitive responses caught the students off guard and left them speechless. Cris mentioned she could tell which teachers "cared about you and who didn't" by talking about "issues that related to my people and me." Cris understood that not all teachers discriminated against Mexican students or presented antagonistic sentiments. By making the statement above, Cris implied that some teachers "care" and she determined which teachers those were by paying attention to their rhetorical and pedagogical styles.

There are "seventy-five thousand undocumented students who will graduate" in June 2008 (Hochberg, 2008, April, 07, p.1) and only "a tiny fraction" of those students will be able to fund their own education since getting student loans is not an option as a result of their legal status. Three of this study's participants are undocumented. Alejandra, Alma, Cris, Karla and Maria were brought to the United States by their parents when they were young, but only Alma, Cris and Karla remain undocumented and face a constant struggle to achieve their higher education goals due to their legal status. Cris explained how her life has been impacted by being undocumented:

It feels like there's so many roadblocks [including] I guess applying for

scholarships, applying for a job and just thinking about the future. If a law

doesn't get passed, I just think 'what's going to happen with me? What am I

going to do? I just think that maybe the Dream Act is the only solution …. My

mom had a chance through my grandpa. He began the paperwork for my mom

and us, but that was before he died.   He had cancer. Now, the whole process was

thrown out– if he hadn't died we would be documented right now. My grandma

now is becoming a citizen so she said she would apply for my mom but that

would take 10 more years, then I would not be eligible because I would be an

adult. So, I guess that I don't really see that happening, I don't really know what I

would do with my life. I can't work, I can't do anything.

The three of them hoped that the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien

Minors) Act would be enacted. On Oct 24, 2007, the U.S., Senate had the opportunity to review

the DREAM Act, but was short by eight votes of the 60 they needed to pass it. According to

Brian Naylor from National Public Radio, "The Dream Act would have given a chance for

eventual citizenship to an estimated 1.1 million young people who entered the U.S. when they

were 15 or younger and have been here for at least five years" and who provided evidence of

high school graduation or a GED. They would be required to finish two years of college or serve

two years in the military. Having this DREAM Act hit a roadblock in the Senate means that

millions of Latinas and Latinos will continue to live in the shadows until this legislation is

enacted. Cris explained how it felt to have her life goals and aspirations halted:

> I guess being undocumented … I think that I wouldn't [with difficulty she
>
> overcome her emotion and continued,] if I wasn't in this situation, I could do so
>
> many things … I see it right now, I see many things that I would be able to do but
>
> I can't ... Just having a future that is just [she stopped to take a breath and clear
>
> her throat], I don't know what's really going to happen. I could be deported. I
>
> just think, how I would handle that, what's going to happen?

Cris feels trapped even though she has done remarkably well in her academic career. Similarly, Karla and Alma have the same fears about being deported and sent to an unfamiliar country. Having resided in the United States since they were children, this country is all they know, and it is all they have.

California's Proposition 187, which sought to deny public education and other services to the children of undocumented workers, started a ripple effect of ill will toward undocumented individuals that carried throughout the nation. It became quite acceptable in the mainstream to demonize the "illegal immigrant hordes pouring across the border" and to advocate militarizing of the border. Certainly, in such a climate, it becomes important to distinguish oneself from the "enemy."

In November 1994, California voters approved Proposition 187 calling it the "Save Our State" (SOS) initiative. The law was challenged in the courts, ultimately being declared unconstitutional. However, in 2000 a new initiative was prepared by the sponsor of Proposition 187 and then again in 2004.

To this day, the negative discourse and sentiments centering on immigration continues. The controversy surrounding this proposition shows no sign of resolution and one thing is certain, these negative ideologies are affecting not only the Mexican, but Chicanas/Latinas in general. These anti-Mexican sentiments are apparent in mainstream society including in newspapers and blogs regarding legal issues and ultimately are present in hegemonic discursive practices in U.S. society. The success of these negative sentiments rest on their ability to indoctrinate negative perspectives and stereotypes in the U.S. population, including the fact that being undocumented is considered synonymous with being a criminal. This legislation portrayed

every person who came across the border as an invader, as a criminal, and a threat to society and

an enemy who was undeserving of basic human rights (see Marchevsky, 1999).

Cris experienced these kinds of sentiments constantly when statements were made about

undocumented farmworkers. The connection between undocumented farmworkers and criminals

was so intertwined in the comments that she stated poignantly,

> I would get so mad at that. I would be like, "If you met my parents you wouldn't
>
> be saying that. They are not criminals, they are not … they are picking your fruits
>
> and vegetables." So, I knew that I couldn't … do anything else without doing
>
> something to help farm workers.

After a long conversation with Cris, I understood that she rejected the insistent

connection between immigrants and criminals or terrorists made within the dominant discourse

following September 11, 2001. Cris stressed the fact that her parents, although they crossed the

border illegally, were neither terrorists nor criminals, but restless farmworkers with aspirations to

improve their standard of living. Cris believed that even though farmworkers made great

contributions to this country, they still faced injustices, humiliation, and oppression due to

constant stereotyping, subjugation to the power of the owners/employers, and humiliation.

These sentiments, however, do not affect Mexican immigrants only; they galvanize

hidden anti-immigrant feelings toward any individual that resembles a Latina/o. This was

evident in several of the participants' stories. For instance, Alma commented that she could

"pass" as a White person whenever she felt necessary. She stated, "I learned English well, with

no Mexican accent; it is the only way I can hide my ethnicity, if I have to. I am not brown, so I

use my good English and no one will tell that I am Mexican."

In this vein, these negative immigrant sentiments are another way to successfully illustrate the mechanism utilized to contribute to the *othering* discourse, which represents Latina/o migrants not as people, but as aliens, creatures far from human dignity. Thus, these discourses of race, ethnicity, language, and legal status are undergirding the formation of national identities and prove that the discourse of race and nation are not very far apart (Santiago, 2000). In order to keep the *other* at a necessary distance, the inability to participate in the rights of full citizenship, prejudice, and discriminatory discourses, in both the mainstream and entranced the pedagogical styles of educators, are utilized to dehumanize the oppressed, in this case Chicana/Latina students.

Summary

This chapter focuses on the stories of 10 working class Chicana/Latina college students, placing Chicana/Latina life and educational experiences at the center of this educational research. By doing so, I establish the problematic issues Chicanas/Latinas face, including various forms of discrimination. The intersection of race/ethnicity and gender discrimination, class disparities, institutionalized religious prejudice, sexist ideologies, language devaluation, and nationalistic intolerance are well-documented within their stories. *La Glorieta* conceptualizes the complexity and intersectionalities of embedded hegemonic ideologies within the social location of Chicana/Latina students. LatCrit and Chicana epistemology alleged that these facets are intersected in the life experiences of these participants as dynamic apparatus forming mutually-constructed systems of power. These systems work coherently as a unit, one dynamic apparatus, to maintain the status-quo, constructing the Chicana/Latina participants' identities and constraining their bodies by continuing the oppression.

The intersectionality in *La Glorieta* also illuminates the frustrations and irritations of the participants regarding negative stereotypes that ultimately materialize in discrimination and subjugation toward them. These negative stereotypes toward Chicana/Latina students are not only coming from mainstream society, but also from their own Chicano/Latino communities. Moreover, the feeling of inferiority and not belonging are among the most prominent feelings among these participants. These feelings are examined further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHICANA/LATINA STUDENTS AND

THEIR *MESTIZA* CONSCIOUSNESS

Chapter four described the multifaceted oppression visible in the daily life experiences of Chicana/Latina college students. This multifaceted oppression included racial/ethnic and gender discrimination, class disparities, institutionalized religious prejudice, sexist ideologies, language devaluation, and nationalistic intolerance. This multi-dimensional system entrenched in the social, political, and economic structures were illustrated in *La Glorieta*. Thus, with LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies as a theoretical framework, *La Glorieta* illustrated the positionality of Chicanas/Latinas.

This chapter focuses on the second question of this study, *How do Latinas negotiate, disrupt, and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression and what tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance do they employ*? Although, the negotiations, disruptions, and counter-stories, as well as the critical consciousness of these participants, were noted in chapter four, chapter five focuses on hyper-amplifying these moments by deconstructing their experiences and analyzing their "critical ways of knowing."

These tactics and strategies of resistance were described by Anzaldúa (1999) as *la facultad*, "the survival tactics that Chicanas caught between two worlds … cultivate" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 39), and also defined as the "critical ways of knowing" by several LatCrit and Chicana feminist scholars. Sandoval (2000) extended this notion of *facultad* by recognizing the counter-narratives and practice that Chicana agency embodies— "acknowled[ing] that Chicanas are not just powerless victims but can form a potentially liberatory opposition to oppressive structures"

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(Bañuelos, 2006, p. 97).   Thus, the Chicana agency is also coined by Sandoval (2000) as "oppositional agency." Anzaldúa (1999) also captures the expression of oppositional agency in her notion of borderlands subjectivity and *Mestiza* consciousness. Borderlands subjectivity and *Mestiza* consciousness seizes the way injustices, oppression, and violence have been perpetuated on the foundations of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other subordinated fates illustrated in *La Glorieta*. In *Mestiza* consciousness, a tactical subjectivity exists, where subjects travel along different oppositional practices according to the political needs and serve their purpose. Therefore, to conceptualize what makes these working-class Chicana/Latina students defy the odds and accomplish their academic and life goals, as well as resist, reject, and disrupt different hegemonic narratives, I used LatCrit and Chicana feminists' epistemologies.

To begin understanding the latter, I went back to every story and searched for moments in which the participants disrupted the status-quo, challenged the negative stereotypes, and resisted the hegemonic narratives. I also concentrated on moments of *concejos* [advice], encouragement, and *apoyo,* [support] not only within their family and friends circles, but also within the education system from people such as teachers and counselors. The combination of all their experiences intimately assisted these working class Chicana/Latina college students in overcoming the obstacles, and developing a positive sense of self-identify, which lead to the third question of this study, *How do they develop a positive sense of self-identity?*

This chapter is divided into five themes that emerged from my participants' stories: 1) Internalizing Oppression, 2) Not Belonging: Chicanas' Oppositional Agency, 3) Critical Ways of Knowing: Tactics, Strategies, and Resistance, 4) *Lazos de Apoyo:* Ties of Support in the Lives of Chicana/Latina, and 5) Hybrid Identities and *Mestiza* Consciousness.

Internalizing Oppression

In order to illustrate the critical ways of knowing and conceptualize the oppositional agency of Chicanas, we must recall *La Glorieta*, which depicts the intersections and borderlands that instill feelings of inferiority and a sense of not belonging in several of these participants. Evidence by the narratives, the feelings of inferiority and not belonging were prominent in the academic experiences of these participants.

For instance, Cris stated that she felt inferior when coming to college. "I came here to college and feel inferior, and I wonder why I feel inferior. Who has thrown that on me? Why should I feel inferior?" There are several indicators in Cris' stories about her life experiences that help explain the struggle for self-worth. It is important to bear in mind that whatever inferiority complexes come to live in the psyches of Chicanas/Latinas, they are the result of a process of social, political, and economic discourse that is internalized, or more accurately, "epidermalized" (Martinez, 2000). Anzaldúa (1999) pushed this point further by claiming that apart from the social, political, and economic negative discourse that is internalized, "inferiority also results in a pathologically vigilant series of 'attempts' to block the white's humiliating critiques of the Chicanas, Latinas, Indians, and other females of color 'with a counter-stance'" (p. 100).

I argue, then, that these "attempts" are a form of Chicana agency or oppositional agency and that these feelings of inferiority and lack of a sense of belonging are transformed by these college students into forces to nourish their oppositional agency. In other words, this inferiority is due to exposure to hegemonic discursive practices and amplified by the constant attempts to resist, disrupt or counter them.   Therefore, we must understand the internalization of this

inferiority feeling to move beyond and unveil not the participants' social agencies that reproduce the status-quo, but their early awareness and attempt to eradicate oppression, thus unveiling the gradually transformation to oppositional agencies.

To understand this transformation, I chose Cris' story. As you remember from chapter four, Cris experienced several forms of subordination due to her positionality. However, it was not until the age of 12 that Cris began questioning the inhumane conditions that farmworkers were forced to live in and pushed herself to acquire a critical understanding of the situation. According to Cris, apart from the injustice and humiliation experienced in the orchards, workers were forced to use unhygienic restrooms while working. These constant experiences of inequality and subjugation were not just lived, but problematized by Cris. She explained that during long hours of hard labor in temperatures that regularly exceeded 100 degrees "I had time to think." According to Paulo Freire, (1972), awareness is the first step toward critical consciousness.

> They know we are using the bathrooms and I am sure they wouldn't want to use
> them [themselves]. Why don't they clean them? If they don't use them, why do
> they think that we want to use them? What do they think, we are inferior? Is that
> why we are supposed to use dirty bathrooms? As long as I can remember and
> even before that … the owners of the farms see us [workers] as slaves.

Questioning the nature of historical and social situations, which Freire addressed as "reading the world," is the second step in acquiring critical consciousness. With awareness of the injustice, Cris' transformation began taking shape. The final step described by Freire (1972) is to be *acting* as *subjects* in the creation of democratic society. Cris began resisting, rejecting, disrupting, and challenging the injustice "with a counter-stance" (Anzaldúa, 1999), building an

oppositional agency. This counter-stance is illustrated in several ways within Cris' life. For instance, her educational achievements, despite her legal status, include participation in MEChA, fundraising for Chicano scholarships, participation in political marches and demonstrations, and other activities such as raising political awareness of immigration issues through mass media outlets and college newsletters. Cris claimed, "It was just too many bad things going on for me not to do anything, I just couldn't do that." Cris' experiences throughout her life including facing discrimination due to her legal status, race/ethnicity, social class, and gender have contributed to building Cris' resilience and resistance identity.

Cris' critical consciousness; however, was described here not to debate whether Chicanas have a critical consciousness, rather to illuminate her "critical ways of knowing" and to centralize our discussion on how her Chicana agency or "oppositional agency is enacted" (Perez, 1999)—that is to examine the counter-stance, resistance, disruptions, and negotiations that Cris employed. For instance, not long ago Cris wrote a news article questioning the views of a columnist who expressed negative sentiments about farmworkers. When I congratulated her for a well-articulated response, she replied, "It is the least I can do. I wish I can do more." According to Chicana feminists, Cris' opposition agency was enacted here, opposing, countering, and rejecting negative sentiments and stereotypes. The university newspaper article, according to Cris, "hit home" because it focused on "immigration issues" and negative nationalistic sentiments regarding the undocumented farmworkers residing in the state of Washington. As Cris took action and countered the issues that affected herself and her community, she continued to struggle with feelings of inferiority. The feeling of inferiority and marginalization that Chicanas/Latinas are subjected to are also expressed and experienced as a sense of "not belonging." Yet, this sense of not belonging within the "America society" could

also be a "central site of political struggle," according to a Chicana feminist (Bañuelos, 2006, p. 97).

One of several struggles faced by Chicanas/Latinas in becoming part of the "America society" is to maintain the right to be different within this society without also threatening their right *to belong*. The right to belong, however, is not extended to people of color in the United States. For example, Isaura eloquently articulated her feelings of "not belonging" and how this feeling was transformed into an oppositional stand of resistance.

Not Belonging: Chicanas' Oppositional Agency

Several of the participants in this study spoke about the sense of exclusion from the dominant discourse. Isaura shared, "In a way, I feel that we have been pushed out by the 'American people.' You are kept in the border [in the margins] to be the workers and get the leftovers of everything like in our law, [how they] targeting us. Trying to make English the official language and jus [how] our culture [is] being viewed [as] just being inferior." This participant mentioned some of the intertwined negative and discriminatory perspectives that through history have excluded Chicanos/Latinos from the dominant discourse. Thus, the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas are not visible, nor valued, thereby creating a sense of not belonging for all of my participants. "To be fully American, I guess you have to belong here … I feel like I am not wanted by Americans," Isaura said. Moreover, Isaura identified the origins of this rejection to race by claiming, "Because I am Mexican, I am not wanted." Isaura explained how she demonstrates her opposition "So I refuse, totally, to identify myself as an American, I do not want to be American, I don't." Using in more detail, Isaura shared personal experiences that illustrate the reasons for refusing that identify herself as an "American,"

I definitely don't fit in, people have mentioned 'why can't you just be an American? Why can't you just adopt our values and be happy with it'…Yet, we are constantly reminded that we are not from here. Continuously, going against the low expectation and stereotypes, … is a reminder that I do not belong.

LatCrit studies analyzed the effects of low expectations by teachers on students and concluded that these low expectations are internalized and digested to the point that under achievement becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for some students (Fernances, 1994; Gonzales, 1990; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Chapa & Valencia 1993; Valencia 1991). Isaura also mentioned that the danger of these low expectations and stereotypes are the fact that "us as Latinas internalized them, and will believe it sooner or later."

Although these low expectations become internalized and create feelings of inferiority and not belonging, some students, like the participants of this study, resisted and constantly countered these low expectations. For instance, as Isaura shared with me her story of how alienated she felt, she also explained that her refusal to participate was her counter-response to the subordination she was experiencing.

I think the biggest time that was illustrated that I did not fit was on my AP Chemistry course that I was taking. There were eleven people in the class, two girls and you had to work with lab partners. I was always the single one. I was the only one that never had a partner; I never work with anyone. And part of it, I am not saying that people didn't want to work with me or anything like that.   But you know, I was a really open, really outgoing person and then all of these things started happening and you get defensive. You start shutting down, you start getting angry and building all this feeling to the point that I didn't wanted to work

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with people, you know? I was, like "I don't fit in; I'm not from this culture. I am

in the wrong spot. I am the misfit. I am the weirdo. I'm gonna work by myself,"

you know. So that is kind of what I did throughout high school. I took AP

Calculus and I was by myself, a lot of classes I was by myself. Usually, I was the

only brown girl.

Isaura got so tired and frustrated by the constant feeling of not belonging that she refused

to collaborate and participate in a group. She "shut down" and decided that she would "work by

myself," not seeking inclusion, but rejecting work as a team. This oppositional act was spurred

by the marginalization and segregation she encountered in the classroom.

Like Isaura, Maria, Karla, Alejandra, Alma, and Cris had periods in their lives when their

marginalization transformed into periods of isolation during high school. Maria spoke about

finding herself isolated with no friends to hang around, during lunch or after school. This

isolation was not so much desired by this participant, as created as a secondary effect from the

resistance to inclusion she exhibited in order to protect herself from the constant reminders of not

"fitting in." Alejandra recalled having only one friend during high school because "I did not fit

in with other groups, … both of us were the weirdos ... she was from Russia and I was the

Mexican… the only thing that we had in comment is that we didn't speak English and that she

would share with me her weird lunch and I would share with her my burrito."

This sense of exclusion from mainstream society and educational system in the United

States was prominent among all of 10 participants. Nancy mentioned, "Because I was punished

for speaking Spanish, and I understood very early that I wasn't supposed to be Mexican, because

I look White, it was easier for me … I knew that I was a Mexican at home, but needed to be

White at school." In order to belong, Nancy hid her identity by "acting white." We never

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defined closely what Nancy meant when she expressed the "need to be White." What caught my attention was Nancy's hybrid identity, her ability to switch back and forth depending on what identity helped her best to belong.

According to LatCrit, the sense of belonging is an essential human need, but this need is unfulfilled because of the color-bind pedagogical styles in the educational system, which in turn marginalizes Chicana/Latina students (Chapa & Valencia 1993; Solórzano, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Isaura, Maria, Alejandra, and Nancy's marginalization was partially a result of the hegemonic narratives within the schools.

LatCrit theorists noted that the exclusion of people of color in school curriculum and the Eurocentric pedagogical styles that exist in schooling has negatively impacted students of color (Chapa & Valencia 1993; Solórzano, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These theorists post the argument that school administrators and teachers are responsible for building a sense of community to facilitate student achievement, as well as describe schooling as a social process where learning occurs through students' relationships and interactions with others specifically classmates (Chapa & Valencia 1993; Solórzano, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Nevertheless, Isaura explained, schools pay less attention to the socio-emotional needs of students and give priority to performance, focusing on standardized testing and a color-blind curriculum that do not relate to, nor include Chicana/Latina students. Additionally, the feelings and experiences that these participants encountered, such as not belonging, are consistent with Gonzalez and Padilla's (1997) findings. These authors revealed that among Mexican of origin high school students a sense of school belonging was the only significant predictor of academic performance, even when other variables, such as a supportive academic environment and cultural loyalty, were included. Furthermore, a national longitudinal study conducted in 2002 found that

students from diverse backgrounds interviewed during the 8th grade and again in 10th grade also indicated low academic achievement for those who had a weak sense of belonging in their schools. Research with middle school students also showed that strong sense of belonging was positively correlated with higher levels of academic achievement (Goodenow & Grady, 1993).

Ochoa (1999) suggested that, "In a white supremacist society where emphasis is placed on assimilating to Anglo norms, practices, and values, claiming an identity, maintaining one's language, and affirming one's culture are all individual acts of resistance"(pp. 4-5). Thus, the resistance, rejections, and tactics these participants employed such as Isaura's refusing to identify herself as "American," her experience of "shutting down," and refusing to collaborate with other students as well as Nancy's strategy of "acting white" clearly illustrate the Chicana agency.

As I analyzed these narratives, I wondered if these Chicana/Latina college students overcame the feelings of inferiority and lack of belonging that were so present in their stories of growing up. To discover an answer, I compared where in the narratives these participants described current experiences and kept in touch for more than a year with all of them to track their academic achievement and their emotional well-being. After one year, I realized that these participants continue to feel inferior and excluded from the dominant culture. For instance, not long ago Isaura, already enrolled in a PhD program, came to visit and expressed that she continues to encounter a sense of exclusion, prompting feelings of doubt about her ability to remain in graduate school. Being the only Latina in her program, Isaura senses the imposter syndrome's mocking laugh. Overall though, it was gratifying to see the resilience of these students. Even though they have internalized feelings of inferiority, they continue to disrupt the status quo, "paving the way for other generations," and to pursue their academic dreams.

These participants demonstrate their ability to "survive in the borderlands" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 217) and to navigate between two worlds, two cultures, two languages, two nationalities, two different spaces. To live in the borderlands, according to Anzaldúa (1999) "means you are … caught in the crossfire between camps while carrying all five races on your back not knowing which side to turn to, run from; … To survive the Borderlands, you must live *sin fronteras* be a crossroads" (pp. 216-217). Thus, these participants, although feeling marginalized, managed to cross different *fronteras* not alone, but with a support network of family, friends, counselors, teachers, mentors, their own "critical ways of knowing," and their *Mestiza* consciousness.

We must clarify that a *Mestiza* consciousness flourishes within *La Glorieta*, it is born *out* of oppression and the conscious struggle against it. "It is a developed subjectivity capable of transformation and relocation, movement guided by the learned capacity to read, renovate, and make signs on behalf of the dispossessed" (Sandoval, 1998, p. 359). The concept of *Mestiza* consciousness, an identity that is fluid, resilient, tolerant of ambiguity, and full of oppositional acts allows these Chicana/Latina students to re-conceptualize what is ambivalent, confusing, and paradoxical (Bernal, 2006) while balancing opposing power. The support network among families, friends, counselors, teachers, and mentors have strengthened their ability to balance the oppositional stands.

The participants in this study constructed counter spaces where they felt a sense of belonging within the bureaucracy of the university, including sororities, academic organizations, and other social and academic groups communities. By way of example, Alma mentioned that she loved to be part of the folkloric dance team because "it gives me a sense of who I am, I feel proud to dance traditional folkloric dancers … I feel, I am not excluded, I feel I belong."

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Alma found a space within *La Glorieta*, a *third space* (Anzaldúa, 1987) where she could rejuvenate her energies, renegotiate her identities and formulate her tactics to "get out and continue my life." Chicana feminist epistemologies articulated that this *third space* is a potential source of resistance where Chicanas/Latinas create their critical ways of knowing and construct their *facultad*. *La facultad* is the survival tactics and mechanism to create oppositional identities to "rupture" culture borders.

In my analysis, I realized that all the participants with the exception of two, were involved in student organizations and taking leadership positions. In these organizations, several of the participants utilized their oppositional agency to negotiate, disrupt and/or reconfigure systems of oppression. These strategies of resistance included the internalization of feelings of responsibility and commitment to become an active participant in the quest to eradicate negative preconceived notions and/or stereotypes commonly help about Chicanas/Latinas. This internalized responsibility and commitment is unveiled in the stories of Mauryn, Alejandra, Alma, Cris, Isaura, Karla, Laura, Maria, Maria de Jesus, and Nancy. The section below explores some of the tactics, strategies, and resistance that these participants employed.

Critical Ways of Knowing: Tactics, Strategies, and Resistance

These Chicana/Latina college students internalized responsibility and commitment as motivation to continue their academic pursuits, to "prove them wrong," and to counter the negative stereotypes. Mauryn claimed that her commitment was to represent all young Chicanas/Latinas in a positive light. According to Mauryn, she felt that there as "no other choice but to" counter negative stereotypes of Latinas in order to eradicate them. Mauryn is tactic for

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countering these stereotypes was by "attending college and being successful …. [I]f you noticed, a lot of Caucasian kids have the choice whether or not go to college, they have their choice. We have the expectations to ourselves, to *prove ourselves,* and go [to college in order] to *prove them wrong*."

For Mauryn, going to college was an act of disrupting the stereotypes. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that Mauryn not only opposed and rejected the mainstream hegemonic narratives, but also disrupted the cultural ideologies held within her household. She claimed that, in part, she attended college to counter the stereotypes of Chicanas/Latinas as a whole, but especially to prove her father's expectations of her wrong.

> What drove me was to prove my dad wrong, that I was not going to get pregnant,
> I was going to go to college and I was going to get the best GPA that I could. At
> that time, I would see that my dad was helping my brother with everything, with
> ITT Tech, going to get food, rent, everything. My parents spent all their money
> on my brother and not on my education, so I am going to prove him wrong and so
> far I have.

Mauryn felt committed to countering the gendered stereotypes of her father. She explained that it was not her capacity, intelligence, or commitment to her education, but her gender that set her apart from her brother in the mind of her father. The following statement illustrated her father's lower expectations of her and her twin sister:

> He only wanted us to go to school to get a brief education; he did not think that
> we would graduate. He said that we were going to find a guy and marry so we
> didn't need to go to college. He would suggest for us to find a rich and smart
> boyfriend …. He said that he never wanted us to have a boyfriend, but he was

expecting it.   According to him, he knew that we would run away with our

boyfriends and have kids.   I know that he did not want that for us, but yet that

was his expectation of us.

With the goal of proving to her father that her gender is not the prediction of her

intellectual abilities and resilience, she is completing her baccalaureate degree and planning to

apply for a Masters in Business Administration.

Similar to Mauryn, Isaura battled the same demons and constantly felt the urge to "prove

them wrong" and "prove to myself that I can do it." In Isaura's case, it was not her parents who

she wanted to prove wrong because her parents were the "most supportive and caring

individuals," but to disprove these negative stereotypes embedded in the dominant discourse.

Since her childhood, Isaura had the urge to disprove stereotypes and go against the norms. She

shared her urgency to "better [herself] … to prove to all these people." This statement, like

many others shared by my participants, seemed to suggest that there is a common belief that

Chicanas/Latinas are capable of changing stereotypes through their own individual actions.

Indeed, part of "proving them wrong" is hyper-focused on individuals changing themselves in

order to change inequalities.

LatCrit theorists believed that students' desires to "prove them wrong" is an individual

attempt to find a solution to the structural problem of racism currently existing in our institutions.

The confrontation with negative portrayals of Chicanas/Latinas demonstrated their recognition of

the distorted images and hegemonic ideologies that suppressed their ethnic group. Moreover,

their motivation to change societal perceptions of Chicanas/Latinas was also demonstrated by the

participants' efforts to successfully navigate through the educational system.

Nevertheless, Isaura and Mauryn realized during our interviews that just proving to themselves and others that they could succeed in academia was not going to *significantly* alter or change racism, sexism, and other injustices prevalent in their communities and in society as a whole. After several minutes of discussion, Mauryn disappointedly concluded, "It feels like you are proving something that can never be proven." Here, Mauryn understood that she was going against something "bigger than me" and, consequently, felt powerless. "No matter who you are, if you are a Latina, you're a Mexican who will get pregnant … if you are the president of the U.S. who stopped the war … you would still be not good enough, not a good president for this country because you are from a different race." Yet, Mauryn persistently countered these negative stereotypes and concluded, "We need to make a difference–we Gotta."

Isaura also stopped herself as she realized that her academic achievements countered the negative stereotypes and perceptions of Chicana/Latina students, but were not enough to eliminate them. Poignantly, Isaura shared, "I would be proving myself, but who am I proving it to? The whole society? They are not just going to look at one Mexican, one Latina." Isaura, like Mauryn, realized that her efforts as an individual were not going to eradicate the injustices being perpetrated on Chicanas/Latinas. Nevertheless, they continue the quest with oppositional stands because "someday, I'll be in a position where I can make changes … perhaps there are going to be more Latinas … together we'll bring change," Isaura claimed. The fact that Isaura got accepted into a PhD program from molecular biology was a feeling of accomplishment, not just because she got accepted, but because she now faces the opportunity to disrupt the gendered and racial makeup of this field of study.

Although Isaura and Mauryn's individual efforts may never challenge the actual structures of inequality, they continue enacting their oppositional agency by not only continuing

their education, but also by constantly stepping into unfamiliar places to disrupt the status-quo and help other Chicanas/Latinas to do the same. In the story below, I connect how this sense of commitment also includes "giving back to your community."

Giving Back: Creating a Bridge

In this section, I argue that because these participants identify strongly with experiences of alienation, exclusion, marginalization, feeling trapped in spaces of dislocation, and being discriminated against, they have expressed the commitment to act as bridges. In so doing, they unite people and spaces that might otherwise never meet in order to build the strength to resist, reject, disrupt, and eradicate oppression and seek the emancipation of humankind. According to Chicana feminists, Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981), Chicanas "do this bridging by naming ourselves and by telling our stories in our own words" (p. 23). The participants are not only telling their stories in this study, they are also committed to connecting these "two worlds"—the academy and the Latino community.

For instance, these participants spoke about their strong commitment to their families and the Mexican community and their desire to give back and help others. Isaura mentioned that she felt "the need to impact my community, like help in some way." This commitment of "not forgetting where you're coming from," as Alma put it, and "pave the way for others" was among several strategies these participants used to disrupt the structures that disempower Chicanas/Latinas.

Alma believed that "not forgetting where you're coming from" is to not forget her language, culture, traditions, "even handmade tortillas." Nancy agreed with Alma and aid, "When I forget, I get lost." According to Nancy, getting lost is losing purpose, aspiration, and

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direction in one's life, thus forgetting about "your community." Therefore, Nancy believed that it was crucial "to stay true to yourselves" and continue "paving the way." Alma echoed, "I am paving the way so that my brother doesn't have to struggle as much."

Several participants also spoke about the decision to attend college in order to help their parents as they get older. These narratives illustrated their commitment to their families and communities as a source of inspiration and motivation to overcome educational obstacles. Mauryn, like Alma, said, "I am doing this for my sister, my cousins, and any *Mexicana* out there … I am here so they wouldn't suffer what I suffered, hopefully, because I will help them out." According to Chicana feminists, the concept of "giving back to my community" is a process of building bridges to link these two worlds and of using their "critical ways of knowing" to help other Chicanas navigate the educational system. These participants spoke of their commitment to become role models for their younger siblings, promoting education, and/furthering social justice to *la comunidad* Latina by becoming bridges.

Maria de Jesus wished to be a role model for "other Latinas in general," and said, "If I can do it, they can do it, too." Mauryn stated that the efforts, struggles, and barriers she faced were to "pave the road for her little sister, teach her by actions, showing her the way … if I get educated, my children will be too, and hopefully my grandchildren." Alma expressed the importance of having role models in her life as she was growing up. Now, she feels the commitment to pave the way for future generations.

Furthermore, Alma, Cris, Alejandra, and Maria spoke about their plans and commitments to help people in their communities after they graduate from college. They chose their career paths strategically to be able to work as bridges to the Latino community in roles such as youth counselor, social worker, lawyer, high school teacher, and business consultant. There were other

participants such as Isaura and Nancy who decided to pursue their doctoral degrees to act as bridges between the elite world of academia and the Chicano community. Others spoke about the immediate affect they could have on individuals around them by promoting social equality and justice. Alma commented: "I'm teaching my little brother how to respect girls and not to be a *mujeriago* [womanizer]."

Maria de Jesus, like Mauryn, spoke of her commitment to her family and community as a source of inspiration and motivation to overcome educational obstacles. Even though Mauryn is decision to attend college was a difficult one to make, she did it thinking of her four younger sisters. Throughout the hard times, it was her sisters and parents who, in their own *ways of knowing,* encouraged her to continue her education and now, it was her desire and commitment to be the bridge between the Chicano world and academia for her younger sisters. However, these participants reminded me that this commitment to family and community can be a heavy emotional burden. Because they are the first to attend college, they are the role models for their families and communities. This was addressed by Isaura when she claimed that she did not want to be a role model. "I don't want that responsibility, but for some reason I have it, so now I just need to deal with it." Like Isaura, a Chicana/Latina student wrote in one of her assignments for a Chicana/Latina in the United States class,

> I did not want to continue my education, but it seemed like everyone in my family
> was looking up to me. I feel like if I stop or fail at some point that it's going to be
> a disaster. I am the only one in a university right now and there is so much
> pressure that I have been on the verge of breaking down. I do want to have a
> good career and everything, but I feel the only reason why I am here is because of

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the pressure. I feel there is a pressure of not becoming the traditional housewife

and if I do become one, does that mean that I did not succeed?

This student as well as the several of the participants described similar expectations from

family members and the pressure to cross the boundary to the world of academia. But, crossing

this borderland is not simple or straightforward. Alma shared, "I want to be a role model,

finishing my education, get a job, not marry, at least not soon, go back to my community and my

Raza ... [but] there is lots of doubts, and fears…mainly I am afraid of making a mistake and

disappoint my family or myself." As Alma explained this, I empathized with her because these

doubts and fears are like your own *sombra* [shadow], you run away but it loyally follows

attached to your body, mind, and soul. These doubts and fears create ambivalence in the minds

of Chicanas/Latinas.

Alma brought me back from my thoughts as she concluded, "But if I do not do this, who

will? We need more Latinas accomplishing great things … I think I am a role model because we

do not have many Latinas role model." The first word that came to my mind was tolerance.

These participants have developed a tolerance for their ambivalence to protect themselves from

the psychologically damage—"a survival tactic that Chicanas caught between two worlds …

cultivate" (Anzaldúa, 1987). The tolerance of ambivalence and contradictions are tactics that

create *la facultad,* or salient "critical ways of knowing" for Chicana/Latina students.

It is evident that even with reservations these Chicana/Latina students are willing to

commit to the responsibility of being a role model, to disrupting the status-quo, to being bridges

for other Chicanas/Latinas and to pushing themselves to the limits in order to obtain their

academic goals. Their resistance even to themselves and their resilience, dedication, and

commitment go beyond expectations.

Overall, the participants' narratives were consistent with Villalpando's (1996) research, which suggested that in comparison to Whites, Chicana/o students enter college with higher levels of altruistic ideals, stronger interests in pursuing careers that will serve their communities, and stronger interests in helping their communities. Furthermore, Suarez-Orozco (1989) concluded in his research on Latina/o cultural and linguistic resources that "dedication, loyalty, and commitment to family … served as stimulus for school success rather than a hindrance" (cited in Villenas and Deyhle, 1999, p. 428). Therefore, "families are the starting point for surviving and effecting resistance to cultural assault, to valorizing and (re)creating a family education which stresses dignity and pride in language and culture" (pp. 425-441). The participants' narratives concurred with Villenas and Deyle by mentioning that their parents and/or family members and/or friends were "support systems" who were instrumental in their academic success. In the *Lazos de Apoyo,* I illustrate the ties support mechanisms in place for these participants.

Lazos de Apoyo: Ties of Support in the Lives of the Chicana/Latina

Apoyo de Familia: Family Support

The participants spoke to several ways they were nurtured, protected, encouraged and given *aconcejadas* [advice] by family members, friends, teachers, and counselors. Maria de Jesus shared a moment in which she was contemplating dropping out, but it was her family who supported her and advised her to continue her education.

My sophomore year, one of my sisters had a car accident, and she was in a coma.

This situation was very hard for me and my family. Being the oldest, I felt

responsible to help as much as I could. So, I missed school for several days to

help out my family. Missing all those days of school and being all lost in the subjects and everything seem to me like I was never going to catch up. But, my other three sisters they look up to me.   They were like "if you drop out what you're telling us to do is the same," and that I should continue my education. My dad was like "if you drop out, your job's going to be in the fields." Since I was growing up that was all I did, working in the fields. So, I decided to continue my education.   I was a junior by now and it was just one more year to graduate from high school.

The *consejos* provided by Maria de Jesus' father and sisters illustrated the cultural tools and tactics or critical ways of knowing utilized by Chicanas/Latinas to overcome difficult times they experienced while navigating and negotiating their educational experience. *Consejos* are ways of learning and knowing from their home spaces, from their mothers', sisters' and elders' cultural knowledge.   Delgado-Gaitán (1994) described in her study that *consejos* are "cultural narratives of nurturing through a cultural domain of communication, imbued with emotional empathy, compassion, and familial expectations" (p. 314). Isaura noted that her mother was the primary person to encourage her to obtain her education.   "She was always like 'you need to be independent and get educated.'" These *consejos* are messages with lessons about wisdom and expectations, focusing on values, beliefs, and ways of knowing.

The messages were crucial in the lives of my participants. Isaura, Laura, Maria, Maria de Jesus, Karla, Nancy, Alma, and Cris, childhood, each recalled their parents being supportive of their education and encouraging their interest in continuing to learn.

There was a strong notion from the first eight participants that they all felt their parents believed in them as children. For Alejandra and Mauryn, on the other hand, they felt strongly

supported by only one of their parents. Alejandra felt she had the unconditional support and encouragement of just her father, while Mauryn was received total support from only her mother. Nevertheless, Alejandra, Mauryn, Isaura, and Alma had to challenge traditional cultural ideologies, such as gender inequalities, in order to pursue their education. For instance, Alejandra experienced the constraint of "staying home until getting married," which immobilized her until she decided to counter this tradition when she was 23 years old.   Mauryn countered the low expectation of her father. Isaura disobeyed her grandmother who wished her not to leave home to go to college until getting married.   The morning Isaura was leaving her grandmother,

> "*Exigi[o]* [demand] to talk to me. She was … crying her eyes out … "*¿vas a tener el valor de hacerles esto a tus padres, los vas a dejar solos y te vas a ir, tu sola?*" [are you going to have the heart to do this to your parents, are you going to leave them by themselves and leave them on their own?]. I remember that clearly, "*vas a tener el valor de hacerle esto a tus padres? Te vas a ir?*" She was just crying her heart out and she said that she couldn't believe it. Rationally speaking I knew that this is not the case. I wasn't going to abandon my family.

Isaura, with the *apoyo* of her mother and father, countered this cultural ideology and pursued her education, even though "I felt, I was betraying not only my grandmother, but my culture." On the other hand, Alma felt the constant pressure of her community when friends asked her when she was going to get married. Alma's mother supported her decision and encouraged her to continue her education.

Maria de Jesus also shared, "My mom has been telling that I need to continue with my education because I do not want to be working in the fields." Several of the participants spoke about their parents being supportive and encouraging even on occasions when parents could not

conceptualize what college was all about. Thus, the aspect of family was still a strong component in the participants' lives. Nancy claimed that family members were the ones reminding her who she is and where she is heading. *Consejos* instilled in Chicanas/Latinas a strong foundation that carried them through to where they are today. The *consejos* received by several of the participants were not only from their parents, but also mentors, peers, counselors, and teachers. This support network outside their immediate family was crucial in helping the participants to pursue their academic goals. Thus, in the section below, I switch my focus to the support mechanisms within the education system that impacted the life experiences of these participants.

Support within the Educational System

All the participants also spoke about the *consejos* from mentors, counselors, and teachers that made profound contributions in their lives. These participants spoke of the importance of mentoring in the world of academia, whether formal or informal. Mentors, such as teachers and counselors, played a crucial role in the development of their own positive self-identity and self-esteem. For instance, Alejandra mentioned, "[t]here are some teachers who were really excellent, they were amazing." She described the first time in her life she received words of encouragement in a *consejo* from a particular teacher:

> I do remember the last words she said to me, and she was, I would say the first
> person in my life who told me 'you have a lot of potential, don't you see that? you
> have a lot of potential and you can do greater things, do not give up' and I have
> those words close to me … words like that were rare, and that is why they are
> really important for me.

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This *consejo* helped Alejandra to realize her "potential." After this *consejo,* Alejandra took the initiative to change her life and free herself from her current oppressive circumstances, by deciding to enroll in the Army. The Army provided a safe environment away from home and the support she needed to get an education.

Several of the participants explained that upon entering a predominantly White college they experienced the feeling of isolation and exclusion that prompted them to seek out an oppositional space. They challenged this exclusion by collectively creating and/or attending counter-spaces such as MEChA, and other students' organizations and sororities. I also noticed these organizations or counter-spaces did not have to be created by the student body. Educational programs such as College Bound, Student Support Services, the McNair Scholars Program, and CAMP—a federally-funded program to serve low-income, and/or first-generation college students, and/or under-represented minorities—also provided safe environments for these participants.

During high school Maria de Jesus, Mauryn, and Nancy were beneficiaries of federally-funded programs such as College Bound, which support high school students earning a degree, and achieving their personal and professional goals, by transitioning them into college. Maria de Jesus shared,

> I am grateful to have been involved in College Bound, all three years of high
>
> school. It's an Upward Bound program that you do in high school, and [the
>
> coordinator] she helped me a lot. She helped me with all the scholarships.

Similarly, during the first year of college, the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) assists Chicana/Latina students who are migratory or seasonal farmworkers. Several of the participants enrolled in CAMP their freshmen year in college. Through CAMP, these

participants had a sense of community, a place to seek for help, a counter-space to belong and refuge within the "White-male" dominated "culture citizenship" of academia (Bañuelos, 2006). These federally funded transitional programs were significant support mechanisms that allowed these participants to overcome the hurdles they were experiencing due to their socio-economic, racial/ethnic, and cultural background.

The Ronald E McNair post-baccalaureate achievement program, better known as the McNair Scholar Program not only offered an oppositional space for several of the participants of this study, but also introduced them to "scholarly activities and community engagement that empower participants to become agents of positive change in a culturally diverse world" (McKinney & Dukich, 2005). As one participant mentioned, "Being a McNair scholar has opened up my surroundings, I am more confident to continue my education as a graduate student and hope to bring new perspectives to my field." Similarly, this program continued to reinforce and validate the participants' oppositional agencies, encouraging the implementation of diverse "ways of knowing" to disrupt the norm of European epistemology within each field.

With *consejos y apoyo* these participants were able to navigate through *La Glorieta* and pursue their academic aspirations. Their voices illustrated the vastly different worldviews about what is considered "valid knowledge." They see their families, mentors, friends, and peers as critical instruments who helped them overcome educational obstacles, go on to college, and make positive contributions to their communities. This strong connection with family and community encouraged the Chicanas/Latinas to construct positive identities even though they faced multiple challenges within *La Glorieta*. These identities, though, are not static, but fluid. The complexity of such identities is explored in the following section.

Hybrid Identities and *Mestiza* Consciousness

I found interesting that without hesitation most of the participants, including Alejandra, Alma, Laura, Maria de Jesus, Cris, Karla, Nancy, and Mauryn did identified themselves as "*Mexicana*." Conversely, Isaura gave an extended explanation defining her identity, while Maria called herself a Chicana.

The eight participants who responded with "I'm Mexican," followed the statement with a *"but"* and proceeded to explain their hybrid identities that flourished in *La Glorieta,* especially at the intersection of nationality, legal status, and racial/ethnic facets. For instance, Cris said "I see myself as *Mexicana* because I was born in Mexico. But …. " In a detailed story, Cris explained how she considers herself different from first-generation Mexicans who grow up in Mexico and move to the United States later in life. "I have been in this country since I was five, I don't remember Mexico … I didn't go to school there … I have no memories except for the little pond that was in front of our home." Cris further distinguished that although she grew up in the United States her legal status does not allow her to hyphenate her two identities as Mexican-American. "Because I am undocumented, I can't claim that I'm from here."

After few minutes into our conversation Cris also pointed out that her answer to this particular question would vary "depending on the situation, … [and] audience" or as Karla mentioned, "depending on the person who is asking the question." In other words, their answers are contingent upon the social context and they could choose to label themselves as Mexicans, Mexican-American, Latinas or Chicanas, but "never Americans" as several of these participants made clear. The rejection of the "American label," as previously explained by Isaura, resulted from the prominent feelings of "I am not wanted by Americans."

Laura explained she uses hyphenated Mexican-American label strategically to be perceived as friendly. "When I am in class or when a Caucasian person asked me, I say Mexican-American to be friendly … I don't like to say that I'm a Chicana because they may think that I am a radical … and I'm not, I'm really friendly." Laura added that she goes back and forth between the labels of Latina, Mexican, and Mexican-American to identify herself, depending on her audience. "When I go home [to her community] I'm Mexican, but here I'm Mexican-American."

Maria, however, declared, "I'm 100 percent Chicana." This was not surprising because Maria is an activist for Chicana/Latina political issues and has been involved in MEChA for several years. Maria's political awareness of Chicano/Latino communities was extensive and precise and her definition of Chicana was strictly a political one.
Isaura problematized the definitions of Mexican and "American" as well as the issue of labeling bodies.

> My parents are Mexican and I wish I could feel comfortable calling myself
> Mexican, but I go to Mexico and I am definitely not Mexican … I am *del Norte*,
> people can't identify with me. I can't talk to them; they think I am either like
> arrogant or just stuck-up…Being American, I don't feel part of the overall
> population. In a way, I feel that we have been pushed out by the American people
> … I feel like I am not wanted by Americans. Because I am Mexican, I am not
> wanted. So, then why or how can I see myself as being American? … So I just
> feel that Latina and Chicana accurately represent me more …

Each of these participants seemed to have a fluid identity that varied with context. The paradigm most often used to describe this complex dynamic is *mestizaje*. *Mestiza* theory

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highlights the fusion of differences and provides models for analyzing racial border-crossing. The stories of Nancy, Alejandra, Mauryn, Karla, Maria, Cris, Alma, Maria de Jesus, and Isaura show how *mestizaje* problematizes conventions of race, nation, and legal status, drawing attention to the fluidity within identities rather than the singularity. It is evident that several of these participants utilized different identities depending on the occasion and the audience. Thus, these participants created hybrid identities that provided safe passage through the borderlands of the intersected facets of *La Glorieta*.

LatCrit and Chicana feminist theories found that people like the participants of this study develop what "seems to be a complicated process whereby Latinos retain multiple identities, multiple interactional settings and diverse 'situated selves' at one point in time (Perez, 1999; Trueba, 1999; Sandoval, 1998). They can code-switch from one ethnocultural setting to another and use different linguistic forms and non-verbal behaviors "to facilitate their border-crossing" (p. 12). In this vein, it is crucial to understand the hybrid identities of these participants not as a quest to assimilate, but as exercising their oppositional agencies and recreating identities to resist and survive. These hybrid identities aid in navigating the waves of power as they recreate themselves in and through discourse.

These participants utilized different identities to their advantage. For instance, Nancy disclosed that her light color skin and her blonde hair often facilitated navigation of certain borderlands. She stated, "To be honest, there has been occasions that I don't tell people that I'm Mexican … because for them to think I'm white benefit me." Nancy used her appearance strategically to "pass for White" whenever she believed it would be necessary to achieve her academic goals. She also claimed, "When they find out that I'm Mexican, they get really surprised … they think that Mexicans can't be intelligent." These strategies are not viewed as a

betrayal of her Mexican identity by Nancy; to the contrary, they are viewed as strategically utilizing every identity she can perform in order to accomplish her academic and life goals. Isaura reinforced Nancy's statement by saying, "It is not necessarily being a hypocrite, it is acknowledging what you have to do, to do what you need to do, at [a particular] point in time. What culture you have to abide by, what social norms you have to do."

These critical ways of knowing and strategies are what Anzaldúa called "the survival tactics that Chicanas caught between two worlds … cultivate." Thus, learning to becoming border-crossers was essential for these participants. Renato Rosaldo (1993) defined border-crossers as "those who exist within the indeterminate physical, social, and cultural space that borderlands represent." Yet, after analyzing the narratives of these participants, I defined border-crossers as "those individuals who consciously or unconsciously create, invent, and construct hybrid identities that are neither singular nor static, but fluid and at times performed simultaneously to rupture the borderland and create *third spaces*." Several of these participants used their critical ways of knowing, their *facultad,* and their oppositional agency to navigate the borderlands present in *La Glorieta,* creating *third spaces,* and pursuing their life and academic aspirations.

The *third space*, according to Anzaldúa (1999), is a space where the "*Mestiza consciousness*" flourishes and where my participants took refuge. The *third space* concept was typified by these participants as the *middle ground* or simply, *the middle*. For instance, Isaura explained the consequences of performing different identities simultaneously which created a restless subconscious.

I do feel there are split personalities … I do feel that there are two different

worlds. I think that lately I have being trying to reconcile the two and bring them

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together because I'm, I don't know the whole switch thing, and I feel like I should

not be doing it. I am dealing with them and trying to find a middle ground …

takes what works from both [worlds] and have one world, so would no longer

have a switch.

Anzaldúa (1999) concurred with Isaura when she described the crossing of borders as

clashing "voices shocking the soul and resulting in mental and emotional states of perplexity" (p.

100). Isaura sought a *middle ground* and acknowledged this *third space* is necessary to create

new knowledge, tactics, and strategies to craft border-crossing identities. Anzaldúa's (1999)

notion of voices that shock the soul and cause mental and emotional trauma referred to the

socially-constructed discourse that formulates realities in the person's mind, thus, creating more

than one voice, and more than one reality, generating ambivalence and complexity.

Isaura expressed the confusion of living on the border of an "Anglo-defined world versus a

Chicano working-class world" that clash and produce contradictions and ambivalence. "I wish I

was at peace with both [worlds] and I wish there were only one. I feel I'm struggling with the

two, back and forth, back and forth."

We both agree about the contradiction in our lives. However, Isaura, as well as several

other participants including Cris, Maria, Laura, and Alejandra, they reaffirmed that these

contradictions are common in Chicana/Latina lives. What I learned from these participants was

that a *Mestiza* should embrace this ambivalence as part of her everyday life, and although there

are mental and emotional difficulties, it is important to accept it, embrace it, and use it to

continue innovating, creating new strategies to cope, and continue crossing borders. Isaura

believe that:

It's not the dissidence, is not about the schizophrenia that goes away. It never

goes away; I think you just learn to be at peace with it. I think you just have to be

at peace with it because it's not two worlds it's one world, *it's your world* and just

happens to have different competence. They come together and they create this

hybrid that is continuously in tension, it is continuously in a struggle. I think it is

just accepting that … that is our reality or *one's reality*.

Isaura's words echoed Anzaldúa's when she stated that in order to survive in the

borderlands one must learn to be flexible enough to switch between different and often

conflicting cultural codes or subject positions. In the words of Anzaldúa (1978), "the new

Mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns

to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to

juggle cultures" (p. 79). The flexibility to switch identities and to develop a tolerance for

contradictions and a tolerance for ambiguity is part of having the *Mestiza* consciousness—an

identity that is fluid, resilient, and oppositional.

Summary

This chapter focused on *how do Latinas negotiate, disrupt, and/or reconfigure these*

systems of oppression and what tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance do they

employ? The concept of *Mestiza* consciousness allowed me to unveil, illuminate, and center the

"critical ways of knowing," *la facultad*, and oppositional agency of these participants. In this

analysis is evident that oppositional practices, claiming an identity, proving them wrong,

maintaining one's language, and affirming one's culture were all individual acts of resistance.

This analysis has documented that Chicana/Latina "ways of knowing" are crucial survival

mechanisms to negotiate hybrid identities and navigate the borderlands of *La Glorieta*. The

Mestiza consciousness also included the support mechanism that *La Chicana* strategically crafted

to create a foundation of *apoyo* from family, friends, counselors, teachers, and people from their

community. They saw their families, mentors, friends, and peers as critical instruments who

helped them overcome educational obstacles, go on to college, and make positive contributions

to their own communities.

When confronted with obstacles, consciously or unconsciously, these participants drew

from their *Mestiza* consciousness to overcome and survive on the borderland. These participants

demonstrated their navigational skills in their own unique ways as they confronted racism,

sexism, and struggled to support themselves while pursuing their education. These participants

also challenged hegemonic practices within their Chicano/Latino culture. Their stories presented

the vastly different worldviews about what is considered "valid knowledge." Moreover, this

analysis also illustrated the Chicana agency that built on their critical ways of knowing, cultural

foundations, oppositional agency, hybrid identities, life experiences, *consejos* and *apoyo* that

challenged dominant perceptions, disrupted the status-quo, and encouraged them to pursue their

academic goals. This analysis was not conducted to simplify the complexity of *Mestiza*

consciousness, nor do I mean to impose a rigid or static definition that leads to dichotomous

thinking. Rather, I utilized the complex and fluid concept that Anzaldúa offered as a unique way

to understand and analyze educational research that focused on the lives of Chicana/Latinas

students.

Recognizing Chicana/Latina students' responses to different aspects of oppression,

society gains important knowledge, which can help transform society's perception of these

groups from passive victims to proactive agents of social change who have made valuable

contributions to countering structural of oppression.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

This study shifts the focus from deficiency ideologies and hegemonic practices to a bottom-up approach examining the stories of Chicana/Latina students in the Pacific Northwest through the lenses of LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemology. Similarly, the theoretical foundation used in this study provides the adequate tools and language necessary to amplify these voices collectively and confront Western hegemonic epistemology, hence demonstrating a commitment to social and political transformation.

Reflecting on the analysis of this study and the contributions made to the field of education, in particular to Cultural Studies, I outline my concluding remarks by answering the three preliminary question of this study, which are: 1) How do multiple systems of oppression embedded in socially-constructed gender roles, racial stereotypes, and other negative preconceived notions impact Chicanas/Latinas academic goals and life achievements? 2) How do Chicanas/Latinas negotiate, disrupt, and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression and what tactics, counter-stories, and strategies of resistance do they employ? 3) How do they develop a positive sense of self-identity?

La Glorieta

Utilizing LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemology as a theoretical framework and storytelling as a methodology, I address the first question by illuminating the multiple intersections of oppression and social inequalities prominent in the experiences of

Chicana/Latina college students in the Pacific Northwest. The intersectionality lens of LatCrit is

aimed at unveiling not only the visible intersections of race/ethnicity, class, and gender, but the

hidden systematic layers of oppression within the social and political structures.

The storytelling of these 10 participants uncover the dynamic intersections of race, class,

gender as well as language devaluation, institutionalized religious prejudices, sexist ideologies,

and nationalist intolerance. The intersection of all these facets is palpable in the life and

academic experiences of these Chicana/Latina students. Therefore, to conceptualize this

multifaceted oppression, chapter four presents the metaphorical concept of *La Glorieta.* This

study is not implying that *La Glorieta* should be subject to reductionism when attempting to

conceptualize the lives of other Chicanas/Latinas. Rather, *La Glorieta* ought to be understood as

a framework and platform where facets of subordination and inequalities are added to illuminate

facets of oppression currently present in the life experiences of other *Mestizas.*

La Glorieta illustrates the *modus operandi* of the mutually inclusive facets of oppression.

The *modus operandi* of *La Glorieta* is reflected in the collection of patterns and practices that

make up patriarchy, class hierarchy, and racial stratification among several other types of

domination practices oppressing Chicanas/Latinas. These collections of hegemonic patterns and

habits intersect and form mutually-constructed systems of power that work coherently to create a

dynamic apparatus to maintain and reproduce its oppressive practices. While each of these

forms of domination and subordination may be distinct, they form part of the overall structure of

domination faced by these participants. Thus, this study extends the concept of the "trinity"

formed by race, class, and gender inequalities posed by Betties (2004) and the "triple"

oppression suggested by NietoGomez (1997) and Vidal (1997) to a more complex, dynamic, and

systematic layering of inequalities that feed the oppressive practices in society, creating *La Glorieta*.

In chapter four, the participants connect their social class, ethnicity, and legal status as they speak about searching for the "American Dream" in the United States by crossing international and national *fronteras* to seek for better jobs and to make a difference. Moreover, this section also illustrates the desires to get an education and overcome these pervasive structures of control and prevail over the "curse of poverty." Social class standing is prominent in their life experiences as the reason behind many of the struggles and sacrifices they face throughout their lives. These include risking their lives on the journey to the U.S., the long migration to the State of Washington in search of employment opportunities, the discrimination faced in the orchards, the scarcity of material wealth, and the stigma of being a member of the lower class. Their narratives also reflect the common discrimination experienced while performing their labor-intensive tasks. Such experiences demonstrate that classism and racism continue to be a common denominator for Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest.

Additionally, the segregation faced by these participants within the educational system illustrated the intersection of race/ethnicity and language, as well as the conscious or unconscious racial prejudices rooted in the pedagogical styles of teachers, throughout their academic journey. These hegemonic pedagogical styles appear to be legitimized, reproduced, and normalized in the classroom throughout the participants' educational experiences. Furthermore, this racial prejudice is further discussed by one participant who claims that the connection of race, nationalism, and current issues of "anti immigrant" sentiments are creating a negative backlash affecting the quality of education for "ESL-Mexican" students.

Chapter four also demonstrates the gendered and racialized stereotypes present not only within the mainstream, but also within the Chicano/Latino communities. Similarly, the participants express their frustrations with the portrayals and representations in mainstream United States culture of Chicanas/ Latinas. These participants face multiple challenges in their everyday lives, including countering the negative portrayals of Chicanas/Latinas. Some of these challenges are described as feeling the pressure of "consistently having to prove … justify … and validate" themselves and their "stories." The common negative assumptions about Chicanas/Latinas being uneducated and unqualified until proving otherwise parallels the logic of being "guilty until proven innocent," hence contradicting the core values of U.S. society. This analysis notes that these repeatedly negative messages have a profound effect on the participants' self-confidence. The potential consequences include the self-fulfilling prophesies of these stereotypes are the Chicanas/Latinas will begin to perform according to the low expectations of educators. Several critical studies have already shown that Latinas/os fall into this trap, unconsciously believing the negative messages and doubting their abilities to pursue academic and life aspirations. Moreover, the experiences of microaggressions regarding a "diversity quota," the triple oppression, and the combination of patriotism and national sentiments are also illustrated throughout this chapter. In this analysis, participants argue that the negative stereotypes of Mexicans should not be viewed only through race and gender, but also by taking into consideration historical ideologies of patriotism and nationalism, as well as the current political issues surrounding the close to 12 million undocumented Latinos from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, illustrations of how gender roles, sexuality, and religious ideologies intersect within a class-and race-stratified society are also evident in the data analysis of chapter

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four. According to the narratives of these participants, institutionalized Catholicism is particularly problematic for Chicanas/Latinas because it indoctrinates them into limited roles within society, especially within the Chicano/Latino community where the Catholic faith is entrenched in the culture. Religion continues to be salient in several participants' lives. For some, religious ideologies are the driving force behind their academic and life goals, but for others "institutionalized religious ideologies have been constructed to oppress and control individuals' lives." The intersectionality of religion, race, class, and gender continues to be a contributing factor in the construction of these participants' identities. Moreover, this section also presents counter arguments from participants who aim to disrupt hegemonic religious ideologies.

Chapter four also unveils the issues of language and microaggression faced by these participants. For instance, the educational inequalities, contemporary segregation of classrooms, discriminatory treatment, low expectations by teachers, and the denial of racism are common examples of the systematic oppressive practices being perpetrated in the educational system. The perception that many educators "do not care" about the education of ESL students is prominent among the participants of this study. According to several participants, a common technique among teachers is to prohibit students from speaking Spanish and penalize them for speaking their native language. This practice creates an environment in which the participants felt their native language is being devalued to the extent of demoting their own culture, values, and traditions, hence resulting in their self-segregation and self-marginalization, as well as instilling feelings of inferiority.

The last section in chapter four explores the intersection of nationality, legal status, and race, which illuminates the construction of *Othering*. Strong anti-immigrant sentiment currently

present in the United States is also reflected in the narratives of these participants as challenges and obstacles to overcome. The anti-immigrant sentiment being disseminated in the dominant discourse not only affects undocumented Latinas/os, but also Chicanas/os and Latinas/os in general regardless of their legal status. Consequently, this negative sentiment has contributed to the "Otherness" in which Latinas/os in general will continue to feel excluded, oppressed and marginalized.

Clearly, the stories provided by these participants are overlapping, which is illustrated by intersectionality of these facets within *La Glorieta*. Not only does some content overlap into other stories, but the sections are interconnected in such a way that it creates a more holistic understanding of the experiences of these Chicana/Latina participants.

Therefore, in this study and after extensive analysis, I argue that in order to analyze the life experiences of the Chicana/Latina, one must understand their subjectivities, not only as gendered, racialized, and ethnicized, but also nationalized bodies that are residing in a social environment where language devaluation, institutionalized religious prejudices, sexist ideologies, class disparities, and nationalist intolerance continue to prevail. This *dynamic apparatus*, full of hegemonic ideologies, shape the construction of Chicana/Latina identities and constrain their bodies, minds, and souls. I insist that it is at *La Glorieta* where the Chicanas/Latinas struggle, challenge, and disrupt hegemonic ideologies; where they develop their hybrid identities; where they shape their *Mestiza* consciousness; and it is through this lens that Chicanas/Latinas view and understand the world.

This study also shows the internalization of inferiority and the prominent feelings of not belonging; however, I argue that these feelings of inferiority are due to exposure of hegemonic discursive practices and the constant attempt to resist, disrupt, and/or counter them. These

attempts are a form of Chicana agency where lack of belonging assists to create an oppositional

agency. These participants have shown a remarkable ability to counter these hegemonic

narratives, overcome the challenges and obstacles, and effectively navigate through the

educational system.

Mestiza Consciousness and Self-Identity

This study acknowledges that these participants are not just powerless victims of the

hegemony rooted in social and political structures, but individuals who seek emancipation by

creating oppositional stands. Thus, I address the second question: *How do Latinas negotiate,*

disrupt, and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression and what tactics, counter-stories, and

strategies of resistance do they employ? By bringing to the forefront the epistemologies of these

Chicana/Latina students, I focus on the moments of disruption, rejection, resistance, and other

oppositional stands to analyze their "critical ways of knowing," their *facultad,* and oppositional

agency, which ultimately cultivates the *Mestiza* consciousness.

Evidence from the studies revels that despite the feeling of powerlessness, inferiority and

unworthiness these participants have been able to achieve their academic goals and life

aspirations. In fact, these Chicanas/Latinas are role models for their siblings, extended families

and their communities, not only for managing to remain in higher education, but for having

graduated with honors and accepted into Master's and Ph.D. programs in various universities

throughout the United States. Nevertheless, the participants appear to live in a constant state of

negotiation, of ambiguity, of divided and contradictory loyalties. Fortunately, these

contradictions and ambiguity do not immobilize them because they are able to transcend internal

borders and external social locations. The tactics and strategies they use to motivate themselves

include the high value they place on education, the internalized commitment to prove "them"

wrong, the commitment of bridging out to their communities, and the sense of pride and appreciation for their culture, language, and traditions.

Moreover, this study illustrates the various mechanisms these participants use when confronted with obstacles, consciously or unconsciously. Among these strategies are drawing from their *Mestiza* consciousness to overcome and survive in the borderlands. They utilize their hybrid identities, *facultad,* and, if necessary, oppositional stands that provide a sense of empowerment within themselves.

These participants also demonstrate a mastery of their navigation skills in their own unique way as they confront racism, sexism, and struggle to support themselves while pursuing their education. They have acquired the ability to redefine and negotiate different identities that permit them to cross different internal and external borderlands. These borderlands are often described as a switch they have to turn on and off as they move through the different worlds in which they operate, whether the world is the academy or the communities from which they came.

According to the participants, the two worlds in which they navigate are different in many respects and transitioning between these worlds result in ambivalence and contradictory feelings that they had to cope with by flipping this switch on or off. For example they adopt a certain set of identities salient to navigating through a particular social setting and then abandon them when they are no longer needed. However, the ability to adopt different identities and apply them to social settings as they are needed was not an easy task, because some of these identities are contradictory to the ideologies and values of the worlds in which these participants were engaged. The ability to overcome these struggles and negotiations in contradictory settings is the key to the success of these participants.

The new identities invented by these Latinas create the *third space*, which several of them utilize as a refuge. In order to survive in this *third space*, which include physical, social, economic and cultural factors, the participants create a *Mestiza* consciousness as a mechanism for survival and in the process construct hybrid identities which provide them a safe passage through these borderlands. Switching identities and inventing new ones is "not necessarily being hypocritical," but realizing and "acknowledging" which identities need to be adopted to obtain a particular objective is crucial in the success of the participants.

This study demonstrates how Chicanas/Latinas embrace ambivalence as part of their everyday life experiences and how they learn to be at peace with themselves. Other strategies and "critical ways of knowing" these Chicanas/Latinas use to navigate and challenge the current systems of oppression are employed with the intent of encouraging other students of color to pursue their educational and career goals.

This study has also documented that Chicana/Latina critical ways of knowing are not deficits in cultural knowledge, but crucial survival mechanisms for negotiating hybrid identities and navigating intersecting borderlands of *La Glorieta*. The *Mestiza* consciousness also includes the support mechanism that *La Chicana* strategically crafts to create a foundation of *apoyo* from family, friends, counselors, teachers, and people from her community. The participants see their families, mentors, friends, and peers as critical instruments who have helped them overcome educational obstacles, go on to college, and make positive contributions to their own communities. Their strong drive to navigate through the educational system is not only an individual effort, but a collective endeavor that would benefits their entire group or communities if they are successful at overcoming the hurdles they are facing. Moreover, this study also illustrates how these participants build on their critical ways of knowing, cultural foundations,

oppositional agency, hybrid identities, life experiences, *consejos* and *apoyo* to challenge dominant perceptions, disrupt the status-quo, and pursue their academic aspirations. These tactics and strategies also provide a positive sense of self-identity, which leads me to the final question of this study. For several of the participants, *consejos, apoyo*, and self-assurance came not only from friends, family, and teachers, but also oppositional spaces created by federal-funded programs and other student organizations that are designed specifically for them. These programs provide them with the guidance and the capital knowledge necessary to navigate through the currents of secondary and post-secondary education.

This study clearly shows that all the participants in this study are talented, determined women, with aspirations to change the stereotypes of Chicanas/Latinas. Especially gratifying to me is to know that for every one of the participants, the transformation began the moment they told their stories, when a sense of liberation and/or emancipation was sparked within them.

Finally, it must be noted that despite the success of these Chicanas/Latinas, this study also shows the harmful effects of a system that is Eurocentric and points to the need for an educational system that is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of students of color, a fact that was already known, but needs to be reemphasized. By bringing Pacific Northwest Latinas voices to the forefront though the telling of their own stories of encouragement and setbacks in their life journeys, I reveal not only the negative stereotypes and assumptions embedded in the dominant western society, but also the assumptions, perceptions, and socially-constructed roles within the Chicano/Latino culture, which continues to constrain and limit Chicanas'/Latinas' opportunities.

Importance of the Study

The epistemological orientation of this study is intended to help develop and facilitate a critical consciousness among educators and provide a clear conceptualization of the different experiences and knowledge Chicanas/Latinas contribute to academia. This study expands the existing educational scholarship on Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest and reveals data patterns among Latina student participants that have not been captured in other studies. Indisputably, much work needs to be done on this topic, utilizing the theoretical underpinnings of LatCrit and Chicana feminism in order to continue challenging the dominant hegemonic ideologies embedded in the dominant discourse, which hinders the ability of Latinas to reach their full potential.

The Chicano/Latino population is increasing rapidly and matriculating in institutions of higher learning, the almost non-existent historical literature about college Latinas in the Pacific Northwest is a gap that needs to be explored by education scholars. Thus, I strongly believe this gap in literature about Chicana/Latina experiences in higher education in the Pacific Northwest fosters negative stereotypes not only within the educational arena, but also in mainstream society. These are among the many reasons why we must empower Chicanas/Latinas to join the national conversation and collectively break the silence of Latinas in higher education in the Pacific Northwest.

It was of crucial importance to gain the perspective of college Chicanas/Latinas in order to further the discussion about the needs that must be addressed for a population that has historically been marginalized. Because, Chicanas/Latinas are not a homogeneous group, by hearing the narratives of the participants, we can get a glimpse of the need for future studies in the Pacific Northwest that will further detail their experiences.

This study could have been directed in several ways, and there is much more that LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemology could potentially offer to scholars, especially for researchers who want to explore the perceptions of Chicanas/Latinas and conceptualize their own critical ways of knowing and how they utilize these techniques to accomplish their academic goals. This work provides a glimpse into the perceptions and realities of Chicana/Latina college students in hopes of informing not only administrators in higher school but also the public educational system. Finally, this study shows that drawing on methods and frameworks of LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemology is salient to conceptualizing the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the Pacific Northwest.

Limitations of the Study

While the findings of this study are significant, this project is incomplete in many ways. Resisting the negative discourse of racism, classism, sexism, and many other "isms" is a lifelong project, thus, this work should be interpreted as a continuing dialogue and as a stepping-stone for other scholars to close the many gaps currently in existence in this line of study. Accordingly, the results of this study should not be interpreted as being generally applicable to all Latinas or all women of color in secondary and/or post-secondary educational settings. To the contrary, the results of this study should be interpreted as the starting point from which to challenge the multiple systematic oppressive discourses impacting the accomplishments of students of color.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RESISTANCE MODEL BY SOLÓRZANO AND BERNAL (2001)

RESISTANCE MODE
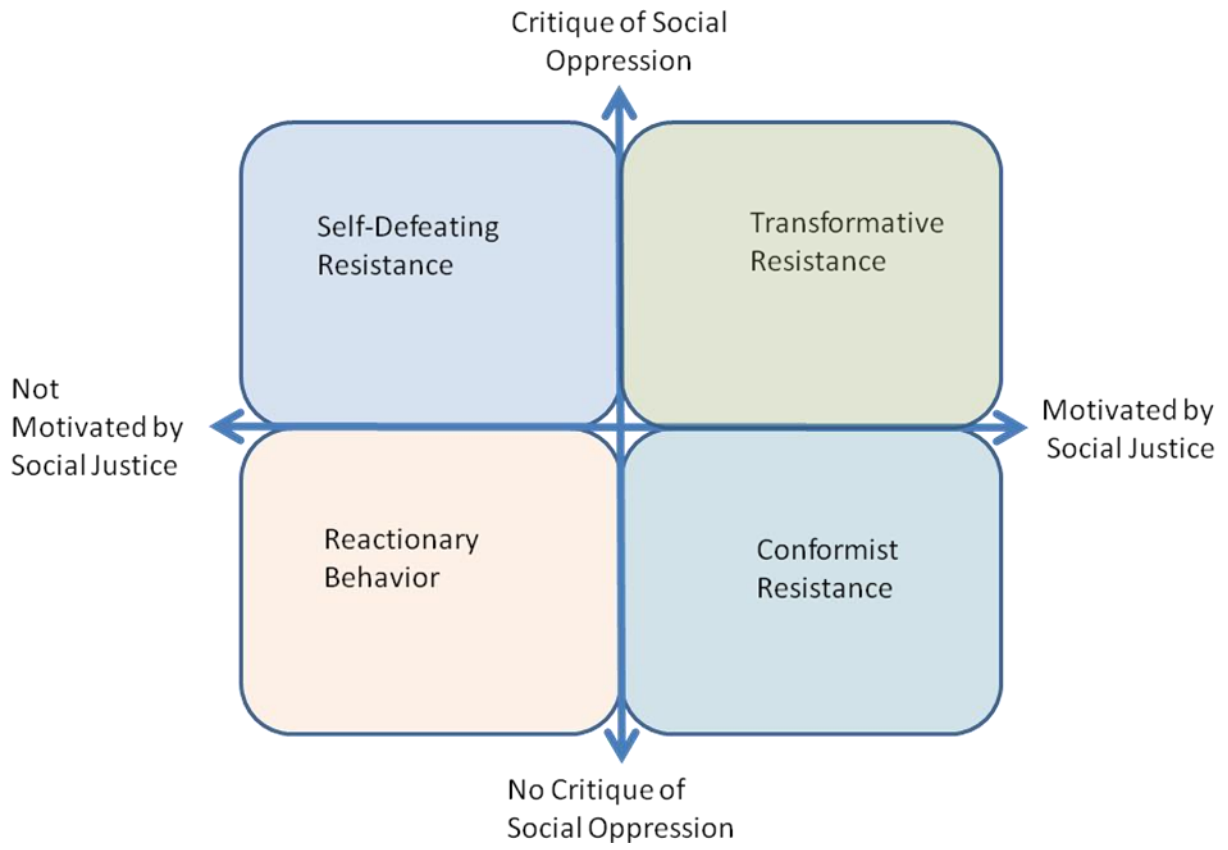
APPENDIX B

MESUAREMENT INSTRUMENT

Guided Interview Questions

Is important to have in mind that the question stated here are only to facilitate and initiate the conversation with my participants and provided some guidance for my research. Nevertheless, once the interview started questions naturally evolved taking different tangent and I did let the interviews go into their own directions, most of the time, from these tangents interesting and important conversations emerged.

Note: The words in the parenthesis are key statements deduced from the theories that will be used to analyze and guide the principal researcher in the analysis of the data.

Measurement Instrument

(LatCrit argued that studies cannot do justice to Latinas without taking into consideration their positionality within a social and historical context the question below help understand Latinas positionalities).

1. Tell me about your childhood. Describe the place in which you grew up including the activities you participated in your community and in school, the types of friends you had, your family employment, life style, languages, and religion if any.
   How do you describe yourself?
2. Students of Mexican descend tend to identify themselves using different labels such as Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican American, Latina, Chicana or American. Do you have any preferences or how do you identify yourself and why? (Chicana feminism and LatCrit claimed
3. Do you consider yourself bicultural or multicultural? And how do you embrace each culture?
4. What would be the most difficult task, role, or responsibility as you embrace each culture?
5. Do you feel part of the American culture? How and why?
   A.

(LatCrit argued that class and racial oppression cannot account for oppression based on gender, language and immigration status, moreover, Chicana feminism argued that religion and nationality are part of the intersectionality of subordinated categories that constitute a Chicana body.)

6. *What are the most offensive stereotypes of Latina females that you have heard or known of?*
7. *Do you feel that by being a Latina female you should act differently?*
8. *Have you experienced any situation in which your identity including your gender, race, ethnicity, language, and/or cultural background has been a barrier in achieving your academic goals? Or you have been stereotype and treated differently? If so, can you explain?*

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9. How did you manage the situation? Did you overcome this experience? Or are you still struggling with the effects?
    A. After this situation(s) what did you learned from it?
    B. Do you believe this is a form of discrimination?

(*Performing or/and passing are issues presented in every Latinas' life experiences according to LatCrit*)

10. Have you in any occasion performed a different identity role or act differently in the quest of obtain something you want?

(*The educational system has been a tool for colonization; these questions bellow are created with the intent to illuminate the struggles and negotiations of Latinas in these spaces, and conceptualize the second question of my study, how do Latinas negotiate and disrupt and/or reconfigure these systems of oppression? What tactics, counter-stories and strategies of resistance do they employ, and how do they employ them in order to overcome these negative preconceive notions or stereotypes?*)

11. Tell me about events that you remember from your experiences in U.S public school (k-12)? How can you describe those years? What did you like the most of those years and what did you dislike.
12. Was there a particular moment, circumstances or events that made you question your decision to continue with your education? If so, how did you overcome such situation, circumstance or event?
13. According to statistics, there is a small percentage of Latinos who graduate from high school and even a smaller percentage continues their education. What contributed to your decision of attending college?
14. In your opinion what is the major factor that prevents Latinas from achieving their educational aspirations?
15. Have you felt of alienated, marginalized or just not fitting in?

(*These questions below will shed light to the success of Latinas and their ways to resist and negotiate oppression and attempt to answer the third question of my study, how do they develop a positive sense of self-identity?*)

16. Who/what influenced or encouraged you to graduate from high school and attend college? Who/what motivates you to continue your education in this institution?
17. Were you assisted by counselors/friends, family or mentors in navigating the application and enrollment process in order to get admitted into higher education?
18. What were your aspirations when you were in high school? What are they now have they changed and if so what make you change your goals?

19. Have you experience lack of connection of the sense of not belonging in a particular setting? If so explain where and why you have such feelings.
    A. If not, do you feel a sense of leaving in two worlds? Could you explain?
20. When experiencing difficulties (if any, this could be personal or academically) what has kept you motivated and focus?
21. What recommendations/suggestions would you have for administrators to make it easier for individuals with your background to help you accomplish your academic goals?
22. How do you define success? Do you feel Successful?

(All this questions are important to understand how these multiple systems of oppression, institutional stereotypes, socially constructed roles and negative preconceive notions impact Latinas' academic goals and life achievements.)

APPENDIX C

WRITTEN CONSENT FORM

WRITTEN CONSENT FORM
Interview

Researcher: Christina Torres García, PhD candidate
Department of Teaching and Learning, Washington State University, Pullman
Phone number: (509) 599-2138 E-mail: Christina.wsu@gmail.com

RESEARCHER'S STATEMENT

I am asking you to take part in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When I have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' I will give you a copy of this form for your records. This study has been reviewed and approved for human participation by WSU Institutional Review Board.

PURPOSE

I am collecting data for my research project on the impact of stereotypes on Latinas and their perceptions regarding socially constructed gender roles. I would like to ask you for your help by answering a few questions for me regarding your background, your educational and life experiences, and your perceptions about stereotypes and socially constructed gender roles. **Ultimately, this information will be published in journals and presented in conferences.**

PROCEDURES

Your participation in this interview should take about 45-60 minutes. It is important that you understand that your participation is completely voluntary. This means that even if you agree to participate you are free to withdraw from the research project at any time, or decline to participate in any portion of the study, without penalty of any manner. In addition, if you don't mind, your interview will be audio taped for accuracy. The tapes will be reviewed only by me, the principal investigator. The tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the project. This project poses no known risks to your health and your name will not be associated with the findings. Also, upon completion of your participation in this study you will be provided with a brief explanation of the question this study addresses. **If you have questions about your rights as a participant you can call the WSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (509)335-3668. If you have additional questions regarding the sensitivity of the study or your emotional wellbeing as a participant, you can call the Counseling & Psychological Services at (509) 359-2366.** This project has been reviewed and approved for human participation by the WSU IRB. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Christina Torres García_____

Printed name of researcher   Signature of researcher   Date

I, _____, have been informed about this study and voluntarily agree to take part in it. I can ask questions at any time during the interview, I can also stop the interview at any time if I feel that I no longer wish to participate. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask the researcher listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (509)335-3668. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed name of subject   Signature of subject   Date

APPENDIX D

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Dear Student:

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study on "Nuestras Voces Resisten: Navigating through Higher Education with Latina students & their Hybrid Identities."

I am a doctoral student at Washington State University, and as part of my dissertation research, I am interviewing Latinas like you to learn your personal and academic stories. If you would like to be a part of this study please make an appointment for an interview with me.

Your participation in this (one to one) interview should take about 45-60 minutes. It is important that you understand that you participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research project at any time.

If you are interested in participating please contact me at cgarcia1@mail.ewu.edu or Christina.wsu@gmail.com to make or you can call me at my cell phone (509) 599-2138.

APPENDIX F

LOW INCOME FORM

Federal TRIO Programs
2007 Annual Low Income Levels

(Effective February 2007 Until Further Notice)

| Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States, D.C., and Outlying Jurisdictions	Alaska	Hawaii
1	$15,315	$19,155	$17,625
2	$20,535	$25,680	$23,625
3	$25,755	$32,205	$29,625
4	$30,975	$38,730	$35,625
5	$36,195	$45,255	$41,625
6	$41,415	$51,780	$47,625
7	$46,635	$58,305	$53,625
8	$51,855	$64,830	$59,625

For family units with more than eight members, add the following amount for each additional family member: $5,220 for the 48 contiguous states, the District of Columbia and outlying jurisdictions; $6,525 for Alaska; and $6,000 for Hawaii.

The term "low-income individual" means an individual whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount.

The figures shown under family income represent amounts equal to 150 percent of the family income levels established by the Census Bureau for determining poverty status. The poverty guidelines were published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the Federal Register, Vol. 72, No. 15, January 24, 2007, pp. 3147-3148.

APPENDIX F

MAP OF WASHINGTON STATE'S CITIES

The participants' hometowns in the State of Washington
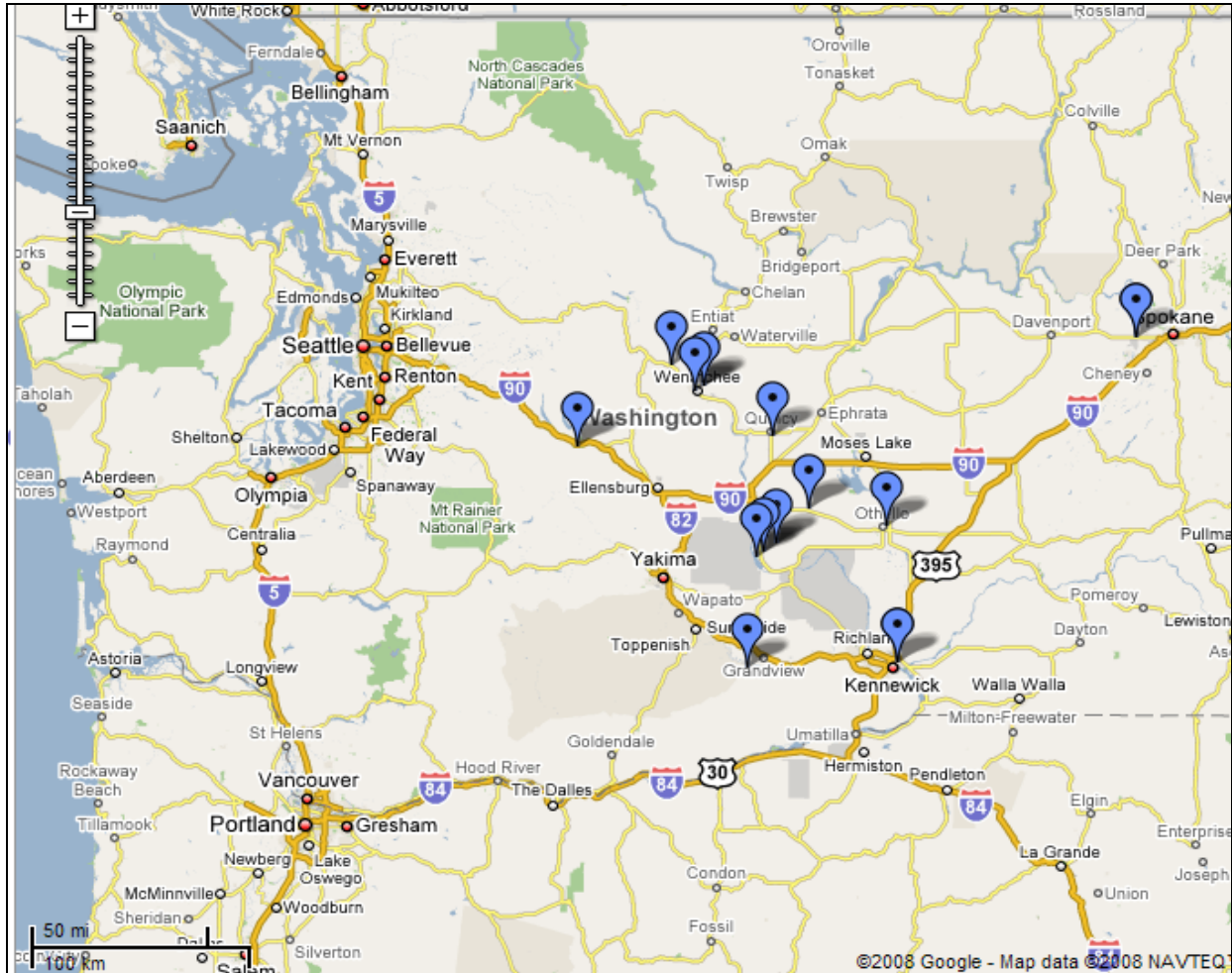
APPENDIX G

**MEMORANDUM OF HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY**

[PRIORITY]: Med

 [SUBJECT]: IRB Approved New Protocol, IRB Number #10025-002

 [BODY]:MEMORANDUM

TO: CHRISTINA GARCIA

FROM: Malathi Jandhyala (for) Kris Miller, Chair, WSU Institutional Review Board (3005)

DATE: 12/4/2007

SUBJECT: Approved Human Subjects New Protocol, IRB Number #10025-002

Your Human Subjects Review Summary Form and additional information provided for the proposal titled "Nuestras Voces Resisten: Navigating through Higher Education with Latina Students and their Hybrid Identities", IRB File Number 10025-002 was reviewed for the protection of the subjects participating in the study. Based on the information received from you, the WSU-IRB approved your human subjects protocol on 12/4/2007. This protocol is given Expedited - Audio/Video/Photo review category.

IRB approval indicates that the study protocol as presented in the Human Subjects Form by the investigator, is designed to adequately protect the subjects participating in the study. This approval does not relieve the investigator from the responsibility of providing continuing attention to ethical considerations involved in the utilization of human subjects participating in the study.

This approval expires on 12/2/2008. If any significant changes are made to the study protocol you must notify the IRB before implementation. Request for modification forms are available online at http://www.irb.wsu.edu/forms.asp.

In accordance with federal regulations, this approval letter and a copy of the approved protocol must be kept with any copies of signed consent forms by the principal investigator for THREE years after completion of the project.

Washington State University is covered under Human Subjects Assurance Number FWA00002946 which is on file with the Office for Human Research Protections.

If you have questions, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-3668. Any revised materials can be mailed to the Office of Research Assurances (Campus Zip 3005), faxed to (509) 335-6410, or in some cases by electronic mail, to irb@mail.wsu.edu.

 Review Type: New Protocol

Review Category: Expedited - Audio/Video/Photo
Date Received: 11/13/2007
OGRD No.: N/A
Agency: N/A

 Thank You,

Institutional Review Board

Malathi Jandhyala

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Office of Research Assurances
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