

THE CONTINUED OPPRESSION OF MIDDLECLASS MEXICAN AMERICANS:  
AN EXAMINATION OF IMPOSED AND NEGOTIATED RACIAL IDENTITIES

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the racial identities of middleclass Mexican Americans, and provides a focus on how racial oppression plays a significant role in the formation, negotiation, and organization of these identities. Providing theoretical, analytic, and conceptual balance between structure and agency, this dissertation addresses how these Mexican Americans continue to experience racism despite being middleclass and achieving socioeconomic parity with many middleclass whites. Drawing on 67 semi-structured open ended interviews (1-3 hours each), 10 months of ethnography in Phoenix and San Antonio, as well as a descriptive analysis of the Alamo monument website and Maricopa County Sheriff's Office 2011 press releases this dissertation examines how middleclass Latinos/as negotiate racialized identities and racial oppression.

This research concludes that these respondents experience significant amounts of racism in the cities of Phoenix and San Antonio. The racial climates of these cities impose racist discourse about Latinos/as and ultimately reinforce and reinscribe existing racial hierarchies of the United States. Middleclass Mexican Americans utilize different identity practices to navigate the racism of these discourse by providing various negotiation, deflection, and resistance practices. Ultimately this dissertation recognizes that middleclass Mexican American identities are a constant negotiation of imposed racial identities and their own understandings of their racial self.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my partner, parents, siblings, nieces and my nephew, who all endured my impatience, my distance, and my neuroses, and still continue to love me. I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandmothers, Sofia and Rebecca, without them I'd have never known who I am.

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## NOMENCLATURE

DRT	Daughters of The Republic of Texas
GLBTQQIA	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersexed, Asexual
MCSO	Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

It's not only in Europe where people have green eyes. Because that's like me thinking that they own philosophy. Or that they own aqueducts. Or that they own electricity. Or that they own...right? So...they don't. They didn't own zero. They didn't own math. They didn't own knowledge. They didn't own philosophy. They didn't own [building] construction. They didn't own anything. Nor do they own genetic coloring. So whatever it is I think they own that's still part of my mis-education.

*Interview with Rudy*

*(9/22/11)*

Rudy's statements about mis-education ring true with many Latino/a<sup>1</sup> people's experiences, my own included. I've had one conversation many times and I often feel perplexed about it—like Rudy I feel like it highlights my own “mis-education.” It is always with White men (though it has happened with White women too) and though I have similar conversations with people of color it is never as traumatic. This conversation is one where I've found that whites locate my racial identity for me, and it represents a moment where my identity is decided for me. It also is a conversation where I, like many of my respondents, have negotiated and navigated who I am. While my own

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<sup>1</sup> I use the umbrella term “Latina/o” interchangeably with “Mexican American,” and “Chicano/a”. While I understand the problems and issues surrounding umbrella terms, I believe that it is nonetheless applicable because the Mexican ancestry Latino population is overwhelmingly representative of the Latino/a population as a whole. Moreover, this project examines the way in which identities are negotiated with an acute awareness of the limitations and boundaries of racial identities and additionally Latino/a identity was a commonly agreed upon (though not necessarily always used) identity for many of the respondents.

experiences are somewhat different from my respondents it seems there is a significant amount of overlap, in particular with the moments of forced or “imposed identity” (Feagin 2010) followed by an intense identity negotiation. It’s a dance where the racial contract (Mills 1997) is being negotiated and (re)articulated.

White (person): You do know that you can pass as a white person, right?

You’re white like me.

Daniel: Well it depends where I’m at, who I’m with and in general what the context of the situation is. But I am aware that in some spaces I can pass as a White person.

White person: You don’t have the indigenous/more Mexican features that some other Latinos have. You don’t have an accent. You are White.

Daniel: Well, given my experiences in the US, I rarely feel as though I’m the white person you think I am. Also and most important to me is that I wasn’t raised as a white person. The embodied ways in which whites understand the world were never given to me nor have I had significant access to them.

White person: Yeah I guess there is not getting around your middle and last name.

This, of course, is an amalgamation of a narrative that whites deploy to maintain, reinforce, and reinscribe racial hierarchies. This conversation has been a means for whites to exert control over my racial identity. It represents, irrespective of their belief, a moment where I am perceived as a white person, but simultaneously never fully

recognized as a white person by them—rarely do whites need to tell other whites that they're White. This opens the door for our racial selves to be constituted on more than phenotype alone (Rockquemore, Brunnsma, Delgado 2008) but rather on a numerous elements dictating the racial self, such as surname, cultural experiences, presumed citizenship or even self identification; and to go further these are factors that are all shaped by the historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which they are experienced. While, I don't deny my light skin, or my largely American English accent (mix of Midwesterner monotone, a little Spanglish slang, and a bit of white Texan twang), I also realize that my racial self moves me into a space that is significantly different than whites of European ancestry.

I have come to realize that this conversation is about how whites reinscribe and control the racial hierarchy when they are around me. In some contexts this conversation made whites feel better about their friendship with a Chicano and at other times it was a means to strip my racial identity from me, particularly in the academic world where these identities can provide a person a person of color with authority or cache that Whites do not have as they do not live processes of racialization. Ultimately this process is about whites exerting control over my narrative space by reworking/implementing the racial hierarchies as they see fit. I realize that my light skin affords me privilege (I am getting a Ph.D. after all) and I am certainly aware of how my other white coded phenotypical characteristics impact my own privilege. However, I am also aware that I have lived my life as a Mexican, Greaser, Spic, Cholo, Mexican American, Hispanic,

Chicano, Guerito, and Latino despite the absolutisms and assumptions of very strictly interpreted structural hierarchies or overly agentic identity frameworks.

For this research this conversation illustrates the “petit narrative” (Smith 1992) of the negotiation of racial identities. An attempt to illustrate a self other than the problematic racial narratives held by Whites ultimately reveals a self that is continually negotiated. This is the primary focus of this dissertation: Understanding how middleclass Mexican American people, like myself, experience and negotiate their racial identities. Much of the scholarship is divided on how to talk about Latina/o identities. Attributing a bifurcated or bicultural self (Anzaldúa 1999, Brunsma and Delgado 2008); or a white, honorary white, or collective black self (Bonilla Silva 2006, Jimenez-Roman and Flores 2010); and even a white/non-white experience (Feagin 2002). However, this project focuses largely on the ways or practices of the self are deployed by Latino/as as they negotiate the racial hierarchy; it is a focus on their actions regarding the racial hierarchy. In essence it addresses the moment after we have accepted the presence of racial oppression and asks how are Latinos/as “dealing with this oppression.” Its wholly an ethnomethodological (Garfinkel 1984) project and is not an attempt to provide causality or correlation but rather is addressing the “hows” of experience and identity (Holstein and Gubrium 1997, Garfinkel 1984, Blumer 1986, Goffman 1959).

Past discussions illustrate something of an incongruence regarding Latina/o selves and identities as they claimed to present an understanding of racialized bodies they instead facilitated the racialization. These past endeavors reveal how past (and present) colonial practices of whiteness have shaped the social sciences (Duster 2003).

Moreover as this research progressed it still encountered problems as more recently has flattened the racial selves of people of color; a necessary evil to maintain strict structural conceptualizations of racial hierarchies. Encountering epistemological problems as individuals are able to move throughout these hierarchies once thought to be impenetrable which unfortunately causes significant complexity for the either/or epistemics of some structural approaches. To solve this, albeit momentarily and rather sloppily, the augmentation of a binary hierarchy to the ternary hierarchy (Bonilla Silva 2002) has become the normative “fix”. Unfortunately within this normative fix there of course are more iterations of hierarchy, all of which lack clarity with regard to how they are experienced in the everyday lives of people of color. This amounts to the search for the base particle in Nuclear physics, where we keep digging deeper and deeper trying to elaborate on just how many layers exist in our racial hierarchy.

To address this lack of detail in how Latino/a people experience racism and the racial hierarchy I focus on the way in which Latinos talk and think about their racial identities. While given that current understandings of racial hierarchies and racial oppression (Omi and Winant 1994, Feagin 2001, 2002, 2006, Bonilla Silva 2006) illustrate that Latinos experience significant oppression that maps their racial identities for them; in many ways they are also talking and doing identity as well (Goffman 1959, Butler 1990, West and Fenstermaker 1995, Storrs 1999 ). This project addresses this doing with significant attention paid to the way in which it is structured and organized by white supremacy. It is this doing that highlights the importance of this project as oppression shapes it also facilitates action on part of the oppressed; it is a dialectic of

oppression (Fanon 2007). While this dialectic is always asymmetrical with regard to power (especially economic, social, and political forms) shifting the structures of the social can and does occur (Butler 1990). This project is not trying to quantify or address the degree to which this shift or chipping away or changing of social structures, it is highlighting how Latinos are moving in these structures.

Beginning with the concept that Latino/a people are a racialized group (Cobas Duany, and Feagin 2008), I address the way in which this racialization shapes the identity practices of Middleclass Mexican Americans. Broadly speaking this argument begs the question of how docile are our bodies given the narratives of Latinos in this research? I believe that the degree of docility is dependent upon the context in which identity is being formed/negotiated. There are certainly boundaries to this negotiation however, insight into the way in which Latinos deploy negotiations provides insight into the effects of the racial hierarchies. Moreover it provides an understanding of the processes through which Latino/a people navigate the racial mappings of their identities in their everyday lives.

This project investigates the relationship city spaces, in particular the cultural and social elements of these spaces, and identity have for Middleclass Mexican American people. I highlight the experiences of Middleclass Mexican Americans living in the cities of San Antonio, Texas and Phoenix, Arizona.. White, heterosexual, patriarchal, middleclass conceptualizations of spaces, and the histories of those spaces, direct the experiences Middleclass Mexican Americans have in Phoenix and San Antonio. Cobas and Feagin (2009 also see Macias 2006, Vallejo 2012 for a discussion of ethnicity)



illustrate that the experiences had by Middleclass Latinas/os is often structured by whiteness or more specifically middleclass Latinas/os everyday lives are lived in white spaces (also see Chavez 2011). Middleclass Mexican Americans are the proverbial “fish out of water” as they live in these oppressive white middleclass spaces everyday. This project builds on these understandings by recognizing that this whiteness shapes not only social spaces but the means through which racial identities are formed for Latino/as living in these two cities. I argue that the middle class is caught between a rock and a hard place, as they access middleclass resources they also must be nimble with regard to their racial identities as they negotiate a means to fit in this liminal space.

### **Why Middleclass Mexican Americans and Why Phoenix and San Antonio?**

The focus on the middleclass is necessary because much of the scholarship on this group is not centered on aspects of race and racialization. In fact much of the scholarship takes a class centered approach and assumes that this group will participate in ethnic assimilation processes (Gordon 1964, Bonacich 1972, Portes and Zhou 1991, Alba and Nee 2003, Macias 2006, Jimenez 2011, Valdez 2012, Vallejo 2009, 2012). However, these processes rarely account for the complex ways in which these individuals experience their racial identities. A basic conceptualization of assimilation frameworks highlights a blanket acceptance of assimilation into a white American mainstream upon accessing middleclass resources (Agius Vallejo 2012). By this I mean that it assumes these individuals practices, such as distancing their selves from other Latinos, attending college, having high income, purchasing homes in predominantly white neighborhoods to name a few, constitute assimilation racially and ethnically. One

of the major problems with this assumption is that it fails to understand that racialization processes while always present have varying degrees to which they constrain Latino/a people . This means that not every context, as I noted in my own personal experience, racializes Latino/a people in the same way. Instead, I argue that accessing middleclass resources doesn't negate processes of racialization, instead it illustrates navigation or negotiation of these barriers and spaces containing these resources.

Moreover much of our discourse on how to implement government policy for Latino/a people focuses on providing access to middleclass resources. Often public and academic discourse argue that providing Latino/a people with access to better education, careers, and income will work to alleviate barriers to their success and experiences with racism. However, this dissertation argues that these solutions, present more of a band-aid than a solution to the problem (see Derrick Bell's 2004 arguments for the logic of this critique). Moreover, these solutions often are implemented in ways that further entrench Latino/a people in predominantly white spaces with an increased presence of racial barriers.

Because these Latino/as live in predominantly white spaces (Feagin and Cobas 2009) they must negotiate and navigate the way in which they are perceived and how their identities are imposed upon them. This means my project assumes two functions regarding identities of Latinos: Identities are imposed on Latino/a people by whites and white institutions and that Latino/a people try to negotiate these identity impositions through discursive strategies and practices.

Because of this imposing of identity in predominantly white spaces, I chose two cities that contain significant Mexican Ancestry Latino/a populations. These cities have had Latino/a populations present in significant numbers since their founding<sup>2</sup>. Both currently have significant Latino/a populations with San Antonio 838,952 (63%) and Phoenix 589,877 (40%) with the fourth and sixth largest Latino/a populations in the U.S. (Ennis et. al. 2010). The reason for this decision and focus on cities with large Latino/a populations is to illustrate that despite these large Latino/a populations white supremacist discourse, practice, and framing pervade the everyday experiences of all middleclass Latino/as. It is often assumed that in spaces with a greater Latino/a presence there would be less discrimination and there would be a lower likelihood of a normative white supremacy in all facets of these people's lives. However, I have found that this is not the case and there is a significant culture of white supremacy and Latino/a oppression in, what I have termed, caramel cities<sup>3</sup>.

### **Focus on Middle Class Latino/a Identities**

Drawing on 67 semi-structured open ended interviews (1-3 hours each), 10 months of ethnography in Phoenix and San Antonio, as well as a descriptive analysis (Wolcott 1994) of the Alamo monument website and Maricopa county Sheriff's office 2011 press releases, I center this discussion on how middleclass Latino/as negotiate racial oppression. To accomplish this I ask three focal research questions. The first is a

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<sup>2</sup> I realize that these spaces were initially settled by indigenous groups (San Antonio – Coahuiltecas and Phoenix - Hohokam) and then by Spanish with the consequence of Spanish imperialism being present day Latinos/as. See Jose Vasconcelos (1979) *La Raza Cosmica* for a the connection that Latinos/as have to our Spanish and Indigenous roots.

<sup>3</sup> Like Chocolate and Vanilla cities, this refers to cities that have significant Latino/a populations.

broad question that situates this research in literature on Latinas/os by asking what do the racial climates of Phoenix and San Antonio look like for Latino/a people? This question addresses how the current social, political, and cultural discourse in Phoenix and San Antonio create a racial climate for Middleclass Mexican Americans living in these cities. I recognize the histories of these physical spaces have been bloody with many white men leading the charge against Mexican Americans.

This focus on oppression will be central to understanding the identities of Middleclass Mexican Americans. However, using Foucault's understanding of the history of the present, that is a history that is shaped by and for the present political, social and cultural climates, I argue that San Antonio represents a space of historical and continued vilification of Mexican Ancestry Latinos and a simultaneous presentation of whites as virtuous (Feagin 2010). This context enables a larger racial climate that facilitates the oppression of Mexican Ancestry Latinos and enables narrow conceptualizations of our racial selves and identities. In Phoenix the approach is less historical and more cultural and political as I focus on the of the Maricopa County Sheriff's office (MCSO). MCSO is at the forefront of the enforcement of racial profiling of Mexican Ancestry Latinos and terrorist raids on the Latino communities and places of work (Romero and Serag 2004). This organization represents a racial climate in Phoenix wherein Latinos /as identities are continually constrained and curtailed as racial other.

Overall, this means that I will bring together the contextual elements of these physical spaces by examining the cultural and social aspects of these environments. The cultural and social aspects of these spaces are the lynchpins that bind Middleclass

Mexican Americans to these physical spaces. But this doesn't mean that the physical spaces are any less important rather it emphasizes the localities of these cultural and social practices. Focusing on space binds histories to the people currently occupying them. In fact one could argue that much of the formation of Mexican American selves and identities are implicitly and explicitly bound to the space of Aztlan (Navarro 2005). The origins of our ancestors was about the exploration of new lands whether that be from early migration over land bridges or rape and plundering by conquistadors.

To be clear, I examine the discourse on Latino/a people living in San Antonio, TX and Phoenix, AZ. These are spaces that are coded via the cultural and social practices that occur within them. In both of these cities there are spaces that produce Mexican American cultural signifiers. These significations are often bound up in the social, cultural and historical contexts of these spaces. The Alamo, for example, is a historical, cultural, and social space that produces discourses dictating the identity locations for Mexican Americans<sup>4</sup>. The MCSO, while not a space (though they do have offices) and don't produce the discourse in the same manner as the Alamo, nonetheless create a pervasive discourse equally highlighting the processes of racialization experienced by Latinos/as in Phoenix. The discussion on racial climates provides important theoretical, conceptual, and analytic means for thinking about how Middleclass Mexican Americans negotiate their identities. Specifically it illuminates how spaces are fundamentally important to Middleclass Mexican Americans subject

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<sup>4</sup> This is not intended to be an analysis but only to highlight how physical cultural and social space intersect to impact the identities of Middleclass Mexican Americans.

locations (knowledges, selves, ontologies) are deployed, used, and (made) available. Illuminating racial climates illustrates where, what and whom these Latinos/as are negotiating.

Moreover, this contextualization of the white racism in Phoenix and San Antonio also allows for the next research question to come to the fore. As I mentioned, this project starts with the understanding that Latino/a people experience racism everyday (Maribal and Lao-Montes 2007, Cobas et. al. 2009), but moves to understand how they “deal” with this racism by asking, “What practices of racial identity negotiation are used by Latino/a people to deflect or negotiate racism?” This question focuses the navigational aspects of Latino/a people’s experiences. Focusing on the identity practices deployed by Latino/a people directly addresses how everyday experiences are racialized for Latinos/as.

Borrowing from structural theory (Parsons 1937, Levi-Strauss 1966, Bourdieu 1977, Alexander 1988) symbolic interactionist theory (Mead 1934, Goffman 1959, Blumer 1969, also see Blumer 1974 for the connection between structural theory and symbolic interactionism), identity theories (Mead 1962, Goffman 1959, 1963, Gergen 1991, Cote 1997, Storrs 1999, Stryker and Burke 2000) and post-structural interpretations of subjectivities (Lyotard 1984, Bourdieu 1977, 1990, Butler 1990), I move to build a bridge between the structural rigidity binding identities and the vast fluidity of post –structural (late-modernity, post-modernity) conceptualizations of the

self<sup>5</sup>(Lyotard 1984, Jameson 1984, Bauman 2000). This means that understanding how identities work requires a tight rope act, balancing an understanding of hierarchical oppression with micro-level movement by actors living in these hierarchies. This means that, at times, racial climates may look static, yet the experiences of Latino/a people will illustrate how these spaces are shifting given certain contextual factors impacting the in-situ factors shaping interpretations of identity. A heavy focus on the negotiation is crucial for interpreting this complex of fluid/static racial identity experiences.

To be clear this is not an empirical account of the causal relationships connecting racial climates directly to identity practices as Geertz (1973) illustrated that would entail a significant amount of decoding of winks, or in this case the decoding of all factors in a city that influence the racialized experiences of Latino/a people; a difficult process at best. Rather this is an illustration of common practices that illustrate an ontology for middleclass racial identity. This means that the racial climates highlight a tonality for the space, and the identity practices that are deployed by these Latino/a people are bound up in this tonality; however, this dissertation doesn't measure the degree to which this is occurring. Moreover drawing a directly causal link would be methodologically unsound given that processes of racialization arise from every element of U.S. society (Feagin 2001, 2006). Instead I argue that these racial climates set the tone for the ways Latino/a people must negotiate/navigate/practice their racial selves.

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<sup>5</sup> I draw specifically from Francois Lyotard's (1984) discussion of the connection between modern and the post-modern. His arguments lie in the mutual dependence each framework has on the other. I argue that the same case can be made for structural/post-structural understandings of identity, namely that identities don't exist in either framework/paradigm but in fact have empirical manifestations representative of both paradigms.

Understanding the negotiation processes enables conceptualizations of how Latino/a people identify their racial selves. The practices of negotiation allow Latino/a people to add their own understanding of their self. To be clear, this is not a measure of the effectiveness of these deployments and the extent to which their racial identity deployments change or shift racial structures is not measured. Instead this clarifies the ways in which Latino/a people react to existing racial structures and hierarchies. It accounts for the way in which these racial hierarchies shape racial hierarchies and experiences of Latinos, and accounts for how Latinos/as deal with these racialized experiences.

This brings me to my third research question: given the racial climates and identity negotiation practices, “how are racial identities imposed on and negotiated by middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people living in Phoenix and San Antonio?” Drawing on a discussion about the ways in which class intersects with race, I argue that processes of racialization are tied to class however, the extent to which one can escape, evade or negate white racial oppression are at best varied in their success. More often many of the Latino/a people in this research must talk about who they are with their audience taken into account. Many respondents wouldn’t use terms such as Chicano/a because of the social implications of this racial identity. Others would use a variety depending on the racial contexts or climates of a given space. All of which culminate in a complex understanding of who Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people narrate their self to be.



By looking at my respondent's narratives of as they responded to my series of questions about their racial identities (see appendices II & III). I have found that many of the respondents provided different accounts (Scott and Lyman 1968) for why they use different narratives to discuss their racial selves. However, these varied responses all lead to their negotiation of a racial hierarchy that is equally variable for middleclass Latino/as living in these cities. Their narratives of the self reflect not only their understandings of their selves and their own identities but also a clear conceptualization of how race impacts them in different spaces. This is not a claim that race is completely fluid; only that interpretations of race is subject to change (Duster 2001). When we address the racial identities of Latino/a people we see that shifts in the racial hierarchy and the ways in which they understand their selves is crucial for why we see confusion and lack of clarity in the sociological discourse about Latino/a peoples identities and how processes of racialization shape these identities<sup>6</sup>.

Holstein and Gubrium (2000a, 2000b) argue that the narrative we have about who we are constitutes self construction, maintenance, and formation, this project draws on these understandings of a self forged in these narrative spaces; specifically by looking at how Latino/a people forge a self in the racial climates of San Antonio and Phoenix. Focusing on identity is crucial as it provides a balance between the all important sociological question of how are people perceived and how do they perceive their selves

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<sup>6</sup> I am specifically talking about the divisions about whether or not Latino/a people are racialized or if they are an ethnic group only (Feagin and Cobas 2009, Telles and Ortiz 2009, Valdez 2010, Chavez 2010, Vallejo 2012). My argument is that this divide is moot if it is understood that racial hierarchies are variable for many Latino/a people, which means for Latino/a people sometimes they're white sometimes they're racial other. This whiteness and otherness is manifest in degrees that are often altogether hyper-contextual.

or as Mead succinctly put it understanding the I and the me (1934). Examining the racial climates of Phoenix and San Antonio and interviewing Latino/as living in these two cities brings together this basic sociological concept. It provides both a larger discussion about how Latino/a people are racialized while also understanding how they understand these processes of racialization.

I am illuminating two often discussed points made by Latino/a sociologists—Latinas/os are not a monolithic group (Gutierrez 1987, Rodriguez 2000) and Latinas/os have shared experiences (Padilla 1985). While the Middleclass Mexican Americans in this research have shared experiences with oppression, they are not all the same experiences and there are significant variations in the experiences among Middleclass Mexican Americans. In the literatures on Latinas/os and specifically on Mexican Americans, there are elements of identities that have been ignored or disparately addressed and this project ultimately seeks to address these gaps. This means the goals of asking these questions about identity are not to illustrate causality or to provide definitions, but rather to highlight larger issues of oppression, elision, erasure, and denial of Middleclass Mexican American identities. Research on racial identities illustrates these complexities as identities are direct reflections of the available selves for all racial groups.

### **Chapter Overview**

With these questions in mind this dissertation addresses the experiences of Latino/a people through the use of 10 months of ethnography, 67 in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis of two organizations that have impacted Latino/a people living in

these cities. In the chapters that follow I will lay the groundwork for thinking about the impact that racial structures have on how Latino/a identities are portrayed, deployed, and negotiated. These experiences are explicitly highlighted in the way in which the racial climates of Phoenix and San Antonio are framed and experienced by middleclass Latinos/as. As the racial climates are made clear the practices of deflecting/negotiating these racial contexts can come to light. Finally I will highlight how Latino/a people perceive their racial selves in the wake of their deflection of racism and racist oppression.

Chapter II highlights the theoretical framework and literature that this dissertation is “in conversation with.” Highlighting the many discussions that Latino/as living in the United States with particular attention paid to the unique experience of the middleclass. Beginning with a discussion of how the aforementioned conversation between post structural and structural understandings are tied together for this project, I illuminate the all important need for understanding Latino/a experiences as both fluid and constrained, as solid and liquid in simultaneity. This isn’t a desire to push away structural understanding of oppression nor is it a means to deny hierarchical power as many post-structural frameworks are accused of doing. Instead it is an attempt to find a common thread between how these frameworks account for the complex processes of racialization Latino/a people live in their everyday.

Building on this discussion the second portion of the chapter focuses on various identity literatures, with my primary focus centered on symbolic interactionist frameworks guiding the overall understandings of how identities are “done”. However I

also supplement the symbolic interactionist literature with a reliance upon structural understandings of how Latino/a identities are “imposed” upon Latino/a people (Blumer 1974, Feagin and Cobas forthcoming). This imposing of identity is crucial as it addresses the some of the significant questions about why Latino/a people experience these processes of racialization. Moreover it represents a significant break from the normative literatures on identities (Feagin and Cobas forthcoming).

The remainder of the chapter addresses how and why these plethora of literature on Latinos/as generally, middleclass Latinos, Mexican Americans, Chicano/as and Middleclass Mexican Americans and Chicano/as is lacking in this discussion. I put forth my argument that racial identities for middleclass Latino/as is a daily process, balancing and negotiating racism, instead, as many scholars argue, merely desires to be like whites, live like whites, or be white.<sup>7</sup> Much of the discussion on the middleclass assumes assimilation as an all-encompassing practice and only considered in an either/or fashion; either you assimilate or you don't assimilate. I argue that assimilation in practice rarely fits with our analytic models and the “vendidos” we see in our literature are illusions facilitated by inadequate interpretations of processes of racialization. Instead falling in line with the narrow field of race scholars addressing how the middleclass experiences processes of racialization. This chapter ultimately provides the backbone for understanding why thinking about Latino/a people as racialized is crucial to thinking

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<sup>7</sup> I don't deny the existence of internalized racism, only that it is often a term used far too often in regard to middleclass people of color. I argue that more often this idea of internalized racism is a desire to deflect, negotiate, and possibly negate racist practices and discourse.

about the experiences of the middleclass and why their identities hold the key for thinking about how these processes of racialization are acting on them.

Chapter III provides the method and methodology for this dissertation. This chapter draws the important links between the research questions and goals and the means through which these questions and goals will be addressed. Beginning with a discussion of why middleclass Latino/a people I argue that this groups is the most important because of the implications regarding our current public policy but also because this group, versus working class or poor Latinos (unfortunately the largest portion of the Latino/a population), is the most likely to have everyday interaction with whites (Feagin and Cobas 2009, Cobas and Feagin 2009). Supplementing this argument is the choice of Phoenix and San Antonio as each has significant Latino middleclass populations they are ripe for research on this portion of the population.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the data collection and analysis as it pertains to each methodology. Each methodology, descriptive analysis, ethnography, and interviewing, addresses the three research questions in this research. As Reissman (1993) interviewing is ideally suited for understanding identities and subjectivities and is the primary sources for this discussion. However the ethnography plays a role in understanding these experiences as it supplements the understanding of how Latino/a people live in these spaces. Finally the descriptive analysis (Wolcott 1994) provides a context for which these identities are forged, maintained, and negotiated. These methodologies paint the picture for the overall discussion of how the middleclass negotiates being trapped in the liminal space of a “rock and a hard place.”

Chapter IV focuses on the racial climates of Phoenix and San Antonio. Using my respondents' cognitive mappings (Berry 2008) of how they understand the segregation in each space. I illustrate how Latino/a people understand the racial contexts in which they live. Their understandings illustrate a larger discourse and context that shapes their understandings of their racial identities and where those identities fit into the cityscape. These mappings illustrate a narrative of racialization that is experienced by the Latino/a people in this research and generally speaking, these mappings all look very similar. This is not an empirical argument about the way in which the racial demographics break down, rather it is an illustration of how middleclass Latino/a people understand the city in which they live everyday.

In the remainder of the chapter I focus on the way in which the racial climate is discursively formed and maintained. Using the discourse of the Alamo taken from the Alamo Webpage and discourse from the Maricopa County Sheriffs office press releases from 2011. Each source provides an understanding of a long-standing racial climate or racial tone that is ubiquitous in each space. This means that each space is pervaded by the discourse that arise from each of these sources. Each source sets the tone where all Latino/a people are perceived as problematic, whether that be as constant invaders of the national body (Inda 2000, Santa Ana 1999, 2002) or as perpetual criminal foreigners (Chavez 2008). Moreover each also maintains white supremacy as normative by eliding the criminality of whites or overtly presenting whites as virtuous (Feagin 2010) over invading criminal Latino/as. This focus provides an understanding of how processes of racialization come to frame, not just working class or poor Latino/a people in

predominantly Latino cities, but all Latinos/as living in these cities including middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latino/as in this research.

After laying the groundwork for understanding the racial climates in which middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people live Chapter V provides an analysis of the way in which they negotiate these racial climates. In particular this chapter focuses on how these individuals deflect or negotiate the racism of these spaces. With a particular focus on boundary making (Bourdieu 1984, Lamont 2000, Binder 2000) this chapter details the discursive practices Latino/a people use to distance their racial identities from the discourse discussed in the previous chapter. Often they didn't explicitly mention the analytic categories discussed in the chapter on racial climates however, they experienced these categories indirectly such as assumptions of illegality or of criminality at the hands of white co-workers or employees. Moreover they generally felt the pressure or "weight" of being racialized in these spaces in their attempts to preemptively address race in their everyday lives. This chapter provides insight into the ways in which Latino/a people attempt to deflect racism in their everyday lives and while the extent to which it is effective isn't measured it does highlight the ways in which agency and structure are present in the lives of middleclass Mexican Ancestry people.

Chapter V concludes with a focus on how Latino/a people are deflecting racism, but doesn't address how they narrate their racial selves. Chapter VI picks up where Chapter V leaves off by focusing on the ways that many Latino/a people narrate who they are. Using the interview data that engages these Latino/a people about different

racial selves that are deployed and talked about in the Latino/a literature, I analyze their racial narratives. None of these narratives are exactly the same however, many show significant overlap with regard to how they deploy a racial self.

The middleclass Mexican ancestry Latino/as in this research had to deploy a racial narrative, Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Tejano etc..., depending on the racial climate. Their deployment of a racial self that is dependent upon the contexts shows how processes of racialization shift for Latino/a people. The use of identities such as Chicano/a for many of the respondents carried “too much baggage” while others such as Latino/a weren’t specific enough. This led to a complex matrix of racial selves, however to understand this matrix of selves I argue that the self or selves deployed by these individuals is largely dependent upon the material consequences of this deployment. This means that the deployment of Chicano/a, for example, was often in a space where this identity was viable or cultural or symbolic cache, however among whites this viability was null or at least significantly lessened as whites perceive Chicano/a as militant or violent . Generally this means that racial identities for middleclass Mexican ancestry Latino/as was dependent upon the ways in which the racial structures were concretized in their everyday space.

Chapter VII provides the final conclusion for the project focusing on how the substantive chapters linkup with the methods, theory and literature. Beyond this the chapter also provides an understanding of how new racial theory about the workings of racial hierarchies must be provided. It underscores that a reliance on 2-teir or 3-teir systems fails to address the nuance and shifts associated with processes of racialization.



Instead I argue that the need for more nimble analytics is necessary to understand and address racial oppression in the United States for Mexican Ancestry Latinos.

In addition this chapter will address how the focusing on Middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latinos provides crucial information about how public policy has failed to address racial inequality. Looking at the 10% rule used in Texas admission I argue that the new approach to admissions while fails to ultimately address the myth of a racial meritocracy. This failure is best explained by the experiences of racialization these respondents in this research have had in their own, predominantly Latino, cities. Ultimately this discussion illustrates the depth and gravity of processes of racialization as they are not escaped through class based educational policies or any other class based initiatives. Instead we see that these approaches tend to be band-aids for white controlled and created racism that fail to help Latino/a people in their everyday lives.

This dissertation provides conceptual means for understanding the experiences of middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latinos. While many of these experiences are similar to other Latino/a groups I express caution with regard to the transferability of these experiences to other Latino/a groups. This caution largely stems from the differences in experiences had by other Latino/a groups in particular the experiences of very light skinned Latinos (Haney Lopez 2003) and Afro-Latinos living in the US (Jimenez Roman and Flores 2010). The experiences of Mexican Ancestry Latinos provides the unique stage for beginning to address the racial oppression experienced by Latino/a people in the United States.

By examining how middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latino/as negotiate racial oppression illuminates how class and race are experienced by 63% of the Latino/a population living in the US (Ennis et. al 2010). The three research questions, as each is addressed by the following chapters, shed light on the contexts and practices of identity negotiation. Each question provides a specific element of how identities are lived while also keeping the overall larger issues of racism, oppression, and everyday lived experience central. The remainder of the dissertation will be an explication of this discussion in further detail.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

The Latino/a middleclass is a new topic in social sciences with a majority of the significant writings arising only recently. Yet despite the freshness of this literature, there has been a constant indirect conversation surrounding the middleclass for many years. These indirect conversations focus largely on the way in which Latinos (and other people of color) are or are not assimilating/incorporating/aculturating to a largely white middleclass. In fact this discussion of incorporation dominates the focus on the Latino/a middleclass. This project recognizes the contributions of these frameworks yet, also realizes the significant gaps in this literature that ignore how racialization occurs for middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinos/as.

To merge this gap in the literatures on a Mexican ancestry middleclass with the building discussion of Latino/a racialization (Perea 1997, Feagin 2002, Duane, Cobas, and Feagin 2009) I focus on identities, racial identities and racialization. I provide a discussion of how race is structural and how the identities that arise from this structuration (Giddens 1984) are negotiated within these boundaries, this project sheds light on how white oppression is an everyday occurrence for the Mexican ancestry middleclass.

This chapter broadly locates this dissertation in theoretical frameworks about identity, race, and class and it elaborates on the literatures about the Latino/a middleclass, Latino/a identities and racial inequality. It begins with a broad overview of

large theoretical underpinnings that drive this work focusing on frameworks dealing with the processes of racialization for people of color and specifically for Latinos and Mexican ancestry Latinos. I then move into a discussion of the Latino/a middleclass literature narrowing down to a discussion of Mexican ancestry middleclass. It then highlights the identity literatures that organize my conceptualization of how identities work for Latino/a people. I conclude the chapter with a brief statement of how this project contributes to a new area of study in Latino/a sociology.

### **Reflexivity Regarding White Sociology and Race**

Since the 1800's (de Gobineau 1915, Nott 1866) the social sciences have tried to understand how people of color experience the world. Of course these early researchers poked, prodded, and assumed biological difference between people of color and whites (Gould 1996, Duster 2003, Collins 2000, Steinberg 2007); bringing current white racist thought of the time period to their supposed scientific understandings of race. This early white research set the tone for centuries of racism that continues today in present literature (Steinberg 2007).

The beginnings of this research focused largely on the physical difference of people of color (and in particular Black people). At the center are discussions about race as a biological, natural, and innate difference between groups of people (Nott 1866). More often than not the race and ethnicity of the White European conducting the research was often the racial group that was determined to be the most capable and intelligent of all the human races. These scientists argued that the differences between people were similar to the differences between monkeys and apes; attempting to

illustrate that whites were a different species than people of color (Nott 1866).

These arguments had a significant impact on the literature about race and ethnicity well into the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, continuing to shape the racist arguments present in this literature today (Gould 1996). I'd like to briefly address a few current discussions on race in the more recent years, specifically I'd like to focus on the conversation between Gould (1996) and Herrnstein and Murray (1994). As Stephen J. Gould (1996) points out in his book *The Mismeasure of Man* we see yet another manifestation of white racism present in Herrnstein and Murray's book *The Bell Curve*. Using white narrative tactics of deflection (Bonilla-Silva 2006) Herrnstein and Murray defend their racist conclusions as not the point of their book and as an irrelevant consequence of their research. Gould counters them by stating, "Murray cannot deny that *The Bell Curve* treats race as one of two major topics, with each given about equal space; nor can he pretend that strongly stated claims about group differences have no political impact in a society obsessed with the meanings and consequences of ethnicity" (1996:370). Herrnstein and Murray masked their racist agenda, just as many past scientists have, through the quantification and codification of the bodies of people of color. Ultimately through such quantification we have seen a historical precedent that provided a basis for early eugenics movements in the United States (Roberts 1999) as well as for the Nazi Third Reich (Duster 2003), informing racist policy regarding the law (Bell 1992, 2004) and continues to shape everyday perceptions of people of color (Gould 1996).

This early research created a basis for the maintenance of slavery and subsequently Jim Crow law. It facilitated arguments in judicial settings for the maintenance of racial segregation and created spaces where “separate but equal” was never (intended to be) possible. Because of their codification in institutions and social structures by whites these arguments shaped the social sciences by intertwining methodological and theoretical approaches with everyday racist thought. The belief that race is a measureable and quantifiable experience continues to be pervasive even in present research on racial inequality and racial oppression (Gould 1996).

More recent literature continues to measure bodies now only on a molecular level, as Shiao et. al (2012) argue that there are “clinal classes” of the genetic code that determine racial categories. Clinal classes are genetic materials that show up in DNA that represent biological organisms occupation of the same geographic space or environment. Shiao et. al argue that there are individuals that contain similar clinal classes and that these clinal classes bear out a shared geographic region which in turn provides grounds for determining race. Like previous genetic and biological claims these arguments largely neglect the way in which the history of social science research and its theory, methods, and methodologies are steeped in racist practices and understanding of people of color. Specifically they ignore the nuance of social constructionist arguments highlighting that the biological is analyzed, interpreted, and codified by people and therefore it is only understood through our own social and cultural lenses—biological chemical reactions are about race only if we make it so. The biological chemical reactions we call DNA are racialized only if/when humans make them racialized

(Thomas 1923, Berger and Luckmann 1966, Becker 1973, and for similar logic see Erickson's 1966 argument about deviance in puritan America).

Even purported race critical research such as Massey and Martin (2003) create scales that attempt to quantify racial skin tone, which in turn, they argue, can be organized into understandings of how race and racial experiences are lived. Of course research such as this falls in to the same old traps of thinking about race as only about skin tone or rather that attitudes or thoughts about skin tone provide information about how race is lived. Moreover research such as Massey and Martin's (2003) also neglects the way in which the positivist and modern thought (Kuhn 1962, Lyotard 1979, Duster 2003) and measurement is steeped in European western traditions of white supremacy, manifest destiny, and the racial othering of people of color (Said 1978, Feagin 2001, Gomez 2007). While Massey and Martin certainly do not make the same arguments as Shiao et. al. they nonetheless represent common sociological practices for measuring and interpreting data about the bodies of people of color. While it can be argued that Massey and Martin (2003) are merely measuring existing perceptions of race their scales and methods simultaneously reify and reinscribe racist conceptualizations of different racialized groups as a scientifically quantifiable and measured variable (Hacking 2005, 2006). By this I mean that understanding how race is experienced is at best difficult to quantify and at worst impossible to convey unless it is directly experienced. Quantifying skin tone as Massey and Martin (2003) and genetic markers as Shiao et.al (2012) become acts of measuring body parts to determine difference.

I reject these racist forms of measurement by allowing the respondents to narrate their experiences through their own interpretations of who they are and how they are perceived. This falls in line with race critical sociology as well as legal studies of race that call for the centering of the narratives and voices of people of color (Ladner 1973, Delgado and Stefancic 2001, Williams 1992). By centering middleclass Latino/a narratives this project accomplishes two primary goals: understanding Latinos conceptualization of the(ir) self and how they experience the imposed identity facilitated by white racial oppression.

While narratives and the theory, methodology and methods associated with narrative can provide significant problems as they too are born out of the enlightenment notions of a measured experience (Clough 1998). Namely the claims of realism or a more accurate picture of experience is what Patricia Ticineto Clough (1998) deems to be problematic in many ethnographic accounts. She draws on post-structural arguments that confound the claims of clear realities to argue that the (re)presentation of narratives and experience in ethnography do not represent a better, clearer, or more accurate reality only one that is (re)presented in a different way; a critique she wields in light of the ethnographers critiques of enlightenment positivism. For this project, I do not claim to provide a better method of measure, only one that enables a different narrative than those provided by quantitative and positivistic qualitative research on the identities of



Latinos/as. I also provide a narrative that gives the audience a cacophony of voices<sup>8</sup> rather than merely my own.

Moreover, to continue this break from the past and present research, I draw on more current discussions about race that are rooted in structural and material conceptualizations (Cox 1948, Blauner 1972, Collins 1975, Bonilla-Silva 1999, Feagin 1999, 2006, 2010). To begin I'd like to use Randall Collins (1975) work on conflict perspectives as an example of how I think about race and racial oppression<sup>9</sup>, not because he was the first or even the most succinct but because his work represents significant movement in white sociology's study of inequality<sup>10</sup>. Broadly speaking, he provided a focus on micro-level analysis that is contextualized in the macro-level phenomenon, made central issues of asymmetrical power relations (Feagin and Feagin 2010) and inequality, highlighted the importance of material arrangements of social relations, and showed that because of power imbalances people exploit and control others (Collins 1975). While Collins certainly isn't the first to articulate these elements for white sociology(y)ists studying power and inequality (Blauner 1972) his arguments in *Conflict*

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<sup>8</sup> While I still believe these voices are filtered much like they are in survey interviewing, I argue that the filters look different and provide a narrative of the self and a narrative of identity. Providing these narratives differs from past survey research narratives in that it does not provide a textual language unique to the instrument but rather the interview instrument only provides cues for the response.

<sup>9</sup> I'm starting here because it represents a rise of a more critical strain of studies of race in sociology. Race scholars (Steinberg 2007) argue that literatures such as Park (1950), Myrdal (1964), or Gordon (1964) are the more likely progenitors of sociology's mishandling of race to which I agree. However, this early strain of race critical scholarship also has its problems and flaws that set the tone for how we talk about race in sociology. My goal is not to dismiss only to build on this strain of literatures as I see it to be the lineage of the literatures that build and shape the arguments made herein.

<sup>10</sup> I use this term to refer to the dominance of white epistemologies and to refer to the plethora of white people controlling sociology in the era immediately following civil rights. Additionally, I note that the area of study focused on race has not changed very much and continues to be dominated by Whites (men and women) and more importantly whiteness.

*Sociology* (1975) provide a significant basis for much of the sociology to follow in the area of inequality. Moreover it provides a basic groundwork for thinking about how race and class are “working” for Latinos in this research. Drawing on these for central tenants of Collins’ framework, I am able to clarify the processes of inequality that impact and affect middleclass Latino/a people.

However, Collins work is merely an ideal type for broadly understanding this projects approach to racial inequality. I call it an ideal type because Collins work represents white sociology’s rearticulation of racialized experiences talked about by people of color in folk tales, stories, songs, and other everyday practices (Paredes 1970, Hill Collins 2000). This means that scholarship such as his and much of white sociology doesn’t quite capture the details of racial oppression. Namely it leaves out a key element of how oppression works, namely that White people are doing the oppression. White sociology ignores the social fact that the majority of the oppression/inequality/stratification/asymmetry arises from whites maintenance, control, and participation in practices of white supremacy and oppression (Feagin 2001, 2006). Moreover this literatures desires to continue focusing on the phrase “inequality” rather than oppression significantly hinders the depth to which we are able to understand how racism impacts People of Color.

Yet, ‘throwing out the baby with the bath water’ is not the goal, Collins and other white sociology (ists) argument’s set the stage for structural interpretations of race and racism in a post-civil rights movement sociology. These scholars used their whiteness to bring forth the purposefully obscured knowledges of oppression previously discussed

only in private spaces without whites present (Hill Collins 2000, Paredes 1976). These scholars began to use and focus on those authors such as W.E.B. Du Bois or Jose Vasconcelos to understand how racial oppression is working and experienced by people of color. In fact, Du Bois made many of the arguments used by white scholars such as Randall Collins well before *Conflict Sociology* was inked. Du Bois provides an example of this awareness of racial structures even in the late 1800s while he was attending Harvard, “To make my own attitude toward the Harvard of that day clear it must be remembered that I went to Harvard as a Negro, not simply by birth, but recognizing myself as a member of a segregated caste whose situation I accepted but was determined to work from within that caste to find my way out” (1968:132). Even when he was attending Harvard at the end of the 1800s he was aware of the racial inequality and the white oppression he would be facing and negotiating. Du Bois illustrates that these notions of racial oppression have been present for centuries and that people of color have expressed their presence for centuries before White scholars, such as Randall Collins, codified them in academic writings.

Americo Paredes documents a history of these understandings of racism experienced by Mexican ancestry Latino/as in his book, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero*. He captures my argument in the opening paragraph of the book’s introduction,

The songs collected here are a people’s heritage—their unselfconscious record of themselves, alien for the most part to documents and books.

There are few enough writings about Border people, who happen to be my people. The Anglos who came down to us as conquerors saw us as

abysmal savages—benighted by papistry (priest-ridden, as that great Texas liberal, J. Frank Dobie, used to say) and debased by miscegenation (with ditchwater instead of blood in our veins, as another great Texas liberal and scholar, Walter Prescott Webb, once put it)” (xvii:1976).

Paredes understood that the songs he documented in *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero* were more than mere folk songs, they were the documentation of oppression and practices of survivance (Powell 2002). These songs represent centuries of negotiating and dealing with white oppression. Moreover they are the historical account of structural understandings of racial inequality. Like Du Bois, Mexican ancestry people have known and understood the oppression of whites for some time, our recognition of structural oppression (caste as Du Bois put it) is manifest in these *canciones*.

This means that while I use these academics in this discussion, I also recognize that their arguments arose only from and because of the experiences, thoughts, narratives, ways of knowing, and ideas of people of color without which white sociology would have even less an understanding of oppression than it currently does. The experiences of the people in this research are lived everyday by mi abuelita, father, sister, brother, cousin, tia, and mother, not merely theorized but understood through their lived experiences with oppression. This shapes the way in which I use theory and how theory itself is applied, as it becomes merely a white tool to explicate that which has already been lived and said, and is not the definitive or validating narrative but rather only the supporting narrative.

## **Social Structure, Agency, Racial Caste, and Latino/a People**

This section discusses how Latino/a people are theorized and conceptualized with regard to their lives in the context of the US. It touches on the theoretical frameworks that organize the thought shaping this project by highlighting how structure and agency are conceptualized and how white oppression impacts Latinos/as. Agency must always be discussed with limitations and structures can only shift in the directions of the concomitant power changes. I conclude with a focus on how I conceptualize class intersecting with race for these Latinos/as given the heavy focus on structural frameworks centering racial caste systems.

### *Structure/Agency*

With this in mind I will provide an elaboration on how structural interpretations of race are crucial to this project. Looking back at Du Bois' statements he was aware of a "racial caste". He understood how his Blackness shaped his experiences at Harvard and made it such that his white peers never truly saw him as an equal. Implicit in a racial caste is that there is a social hierarchy, governed by social norms, laws, and contracts (Feagin 2006, Mills 1997). The existence of a racial caste system is crucial to this project as it is a central tenant for thinking about how Latinos (and other people of color) are racially organized in their everyday lives. Bonilla-Silva clarifies, "I argue that races exist as a social phenomenon wherever a racial structure is in place—that is wherever there are social, political, and ideological practices that produce differential status between racialized groups (races)" (1999:900). Racialization faced by Latinos/as in this research illustrate how understanding race as a social structure is crucial to thinking about their

racial selves. Latinos in the US are socialized into this racial caste system from the day they are born and they learn where they, as Latinos, stand in relation to whites, Asians, Blacks, indigenous groups and even other Latinos/as.

Early discussions of social structures bear little resemblance to current conceptualizations of the workings of social structure and race. Many early discussions of structure fell short of being able to explain changes and shifts in the make up of these structures (Ritzer 2000, see Bourdieu 1990 comments on structuralism). Additionally very few arguments accounted for action (Goffman 1959) on part of people “caught up” in these structures (Sewell 1992, Emirbayer 1997, Emirbayer and Mische 1998). However, with the cultural turn (Jameson 1998, Hall, Neitz, and Battani 2003) we see the discussions of structure move toward a recognition that changes occur and shifts are imminent with regard to these structures (Hays 1994). This movement represents an accounting for the possibilities of “structuring structured structures” (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) and “structuration” (Giddens 1984) which all move toward understandings of social structures as far more fluid than we previously believed.

William Sewell’s (1992) argument about the duality of structure is an early iteration of this literature but it details the way in which I conceptualize structure for this dissertation. Sewell (1992) argues that despite its myriad of problems social structure is an essential concept for our approaches in sociology to understanding how the social world (s) is patterned. Proposing three key elements of change for thinking about social structure we see that Sewell is attempting to create a more dynamic theoretical, analytic, and conceptual tool. He clarifies and states that his theory of structure, “will attempt (1)

to recognize the agency of social actors, (2) to build the possibility of change into the concept of structure, and (3) to overcome the divide between semiotic and materialist visions of structure”(1992:3). Sewell’s argument conceptualizes structures to account for human action in systems and in this case systems of oppression. His argument enables a means to understand how/why Latino/a people talk about their racial identities in ways that both differ and are similar to the normative structural interpretations about Latinos/as as a whole.

In Sewell’s conceptualization of structure he writes, “Knowledge of a rule or a schema by definition means the ability to transpose or extend it—that is, to apply it creatively. If this is so, then agency, which I would define as entailing the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts, is inherent in the knowledge of cultural schemas that characterizes all minimally competent members of society”(1992:18). Sewell is arguing for the existence/presence of agentic action within the dual conceptualization of social structure (social structures as resources and schemas). Stating that because actors understand and know/access (that is, they are cognizant in some capacity (see Bourdieu 1977, Schwartz 1997, Vaisey 2008) the variously codified schemas/resources, they are equally able to reapply that schema/resource in a different social context. This argument is compelling as it enables agency to exist within our understandings of structure. As people encounter various schemas (and resources) they are, at times, able to (re) appropriate these schemas/resources. For Latinos/as in this research this means that they are able to use and/or (re)appropriate white conceptualizations of who Latino/a people are/should be in various contexts. While,

again, it is unclear as to the level of effectiveness of reappropriated, contrary, or counter-frames (Feagin 2010) it does highlight the presence of bounded and constrained sense of agency.

Latinos/as are caught in the racial structures that organize their everyday lives; White controlled systemic racial structures, racial hierarchies, and racialized practices all organize their experiences. Their actions are only agentic within these schemas/boundaries, which means they're doing "things" but only in context and within the boundaries of the white controlled racial caste system. Yet like Sewell argues, these doings can work against normative schemas and/or represent the reapplication of normative schemas (see Chapters V and VI and Feagin's 2010 arguments about "home culture"). Measuring the effectiveness of the reapplication of schemas is difficult as they are often met with significant white resistance and oppression. However, it can be argued that the Latino/as in this research are able to negotiate racial hierarchies because of their middle class status. Examining how the racial caste system impacts, shapes and organizes racial hierarchies is crucial to thinking about the ways in which structure and agency work in the oppressive space of the U.S.

### *The Racial Caste System and Latinos*

This racial caste system arose from a historical and social milieu that centered the enslavement and subjugation of Black and Indigenous groups (Feagin 2001, Gomez 2007, Mirabal and Lao-Montes 2007). According to Stannard (1993) this subjugation was justified by Spanish conquistadors because it was deemed the word of their Christian god directing Spanish Europeans to conquer and consume the space of "the



Americas” in the early 1500s. This early and immediate subjugation was largely held over from the existing African Slave trade. However, the processes of racialization became manifest in different manners for different racial groups (Takaki 1989, 1992, Omi and Winant 1994, Gonzalez 2000, Feagin and Feagin 2010). Historically this early beginning of subjugation was crucial as it sets the tone for hundreds of years of White European racial oppression and dominance of people of color living in the Americas.

To clarify, the European invasion of the Americas that began in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century shaped the United States as we know it today, the descendents of these Europeans, White Americans, now control much of the hemisphere and its resources (Stannard 1993). In the process of their invasion the White Europeans committed (and continue to commit) acts of genocide upon the indigenous people who live(d) in the Americas. These early Europeans set the stage for more Europeans to come and settle North of Hispanola on what is now the Northeastern portion of the U.S. As these White people settled, they had difficulty enslaving the Indigenous populations, but the growth of the slave trade from Africa fed their insatiable desire for cheap, disposable labor (Feagin 2001). This set into motion an entire country, economy, culture, and society premised upon the enslavement and oppression of racial others, the country we now refer to as the United States.

According to Feagin (2006) this history of enslavement relates to our present racial hierarchies. He argues that for slavery to have been legalized it must have been incorporated into the foundational principle principles of the U.S. (also see Feagin 2001). This of course occurred as the group of all white “founding” oppressors generated

documents (US constitution and Bill of Rights) that would solidify their location (and those of other whites) in a social structure that kept slavery legal for years to come. But they did more than keep slavery legal for some time, they have made it so that the United States is, to this day, fundamentally structured to oppress people of color. Feagin gives us a brief timeline of this occurrence,

Slavery was replaced in the period from the 1880s to the 1910s by a system of near-slavery usually called legal or official segregation. These rigidly segregated social arrangements lasted in the United States until the late 1960s . In turn, this lengthy era of near-slavery was followed in the 1960s by the contemporary era of more informal racial discrimination, a racial oppression that is still extensive in U.S. society (2006:33).

Feagin illustrates how historical events facilitate the emergence of racial structures and provides us with our current system of racial oppression. It also shows both how and why white supremacy continues to be ubiquitous in our society. Feagin's arguments lead us to understand that whites have historically been in control of people of color, which set the precedent for asymmetrical forms of power relations. The unequal power relations in turn allow for a whites only intergenerational transmission of privilege and wealth. This transmission of white wealth and privilege becomes normative as whites work(ed) to build this asymmetry into the social, structures, institutions, and lives of all people living in the United States (Oliver and Shapiro 1997, Bonilla-Silva 1997, Feagin & Feagin 2010, Feagin 2006, 2010).

This is crucial to thinking about race today because a structural interpretation necessarily examines race and racialization as fundamental to every person's socialization (Feagin 2006). As histories become normalized and their consequences become part of our everyday lives it shapes our racial identities and racial selves. Moreover the everyday socialization into race and racial groups provides the basis for thinking about how middleclass Latino/a people experience Phoenix and San Antonio. Looking at the ways in which this everyday embeddedness of racial processes is crucial to thinking about how these Latino/a people form their identities. Namely because it points the main discussion of this dissertation: how Latino/a racial identities are imposed and negotiated. This simultaneous imposing and negotiation can be understood through dialectical arguments about oppressor and oppressed (Fanon 1963, Blauner 1972) a healthy realization of how negotiation isn't always clear in the literature on structural racism.

One of the crucial elements of understanding how racial structures work and are acting on people of color is to think about the processes of white oppression. A key process of this oppression is the racial caste system (Cox 1948, Dubois 1968) and the racial hierarchies are related to this system. For Latino/a people the racial hierarchies that produce the racial caste they experience is varied but it nonetheless is one that is generally experienced as oppressive. Scholars such as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva have argued that the racial caste system is one where Latino/a people experiences vary as their skin tone and other racial features become more or less salient for the whites in control of the racial hierarchy (2002, 2006). He argues that this racial hierarchy contains three

tiers, white, honorary white, and collective Black with whites on top, honorary white in the middle, and the collective black on the bottom (Bonilla-Silva 2002). This system of thought accounts for a more nuanced conceptualization of how the racial caste system breaks down for all people of color. It attempts to account for how those with lighter skin tones and more white features are able to access white controlled resources. Bonilla-Silva (2004) concludes that our society is headed in the direction of a Latin American three tier racial hierarchy; this is becoming manifest as we see the movement of more racial groups into the middleclass and their subsequent accessing of white controlled resources.

In this same vein Saenz and Murgia (2002) have also argued that Latinos experience, what Bonilla-Silva described as the Latin Americanization of the US racial hierarchy (2002), however, they claim that this racial hierarchy has existed in the US since the nation's inception. They provide a brief description of the evolution of the three tier racial hierarchy. They start with colonial America,

In contrast to [Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's] thesis, we believe that a three-tier racial system has always existed in the United States. The three groups in colonial America consisted of English Whites at the top, White indentured servants in a middle position, and, at the bottom, both Native Americans and, beginning with the importation of slaves to the United States in 1619, Black slaves (2002:86).

We see that in colonial America, according to Saenz and Murgia, the racial hierarchy is intertwined with class and class status. Some English Whites are placed in the middle

position because of their servant status pushes them down into the “buffer” (Bonilla-Silva 2006) between elite English whites and dark-skinned Black and Indigenous people. Saenz and Murgia continue their evolutionary argument with the institutionalization of slavery and the increase of European immigration,

Later, the three-tier system became Scottish and English Whites at the top, European immigrants (Irish and German immigrants in particular) in the middle, and Blacks (freemen in the North and slaves in the South until the Civil War) and Native Americans at the bottom. Over time, immigrant Europeans from northern and western Europe joined the earliest English colonial settlers as Whites in the first position, and, after the source of European immigration to the U.S. shifted to southern and eastern Europe during the 1880–1920 time period, the middle group of honorary Whites developed from peoples from the south and east of Europe such as the Italians, Poles, and Jews (2002:86-87).

Like the white European immigrants that came before them Latinos have made their way up the racial hierarchy, assimilating to the middle status of honorary white and more importantly not Black or Indigenous. Saenz and Murgia bring us up to speed with the rest of the immigrant waves, in particular waves of non-Europeans, people from Asia and Latin America now join the population of the US once again forcing Whites who control these hierarchies to ask “Who is White?”

The major change in the three-tier system is that now, the upper group is composed of European Whites, regardless of their country of origin in

Europe, and the middle group includes people of color, namely, middle class Asians and middle class Hispanics, whereas previously it consisted only of European Whites. The third tier now is composed of working and lower class people of color. Broadly speaking, the tri-racial hierarchy today in the United States, instead of being racially “White, White, and Black” is now “White, Brown, and Black.”

Saenz and Murgia continue to describe processes of racialization as being related to class status much like it did in the early history of the United States with European indentured servants. Specifically for Saenz and Murgia the racial hierarchy of today is one that is significantly impacted by class, especially for Blacks and Latinos. I agree with these scholars’ statements, that class status is an important factor that can impact race, and the data in this research bears out their arguments. Middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinos do gain access to the white middleclass coded resources of the top and middle tiers of the racial hierarchy. However, they do not gain access to these resources in the same manner as whites and they regularly experience racism; though it’s often a different manifestation of racism from their parents or grandparent’s experiences, they nonetheless are discriminated against.

Feagin and Sikes (1994) argue that many times middleclass Blacks have experienced significant amounts of racism in their daily lives, underscoring the ways in which class status is more likely to be trumped by racial status. In their discussion of how middleclass Blacks are treated in public spaces they provide example after example of how racism is experienced in the everyday lives of economically, educationally, and,

for all intents and purposes, individuals who are living seemingly idyllic lifestyles. But Feagin and Sikes make an important point in this discussion beyond their arguments about a continuous bombardment of racist acts, they state, “Discrimination here was not the ‘No Negroes’ of the recent past, but rejection in the form of poor service. Again a black person’s skin color took precedence over money” (1994: 42). They clarify that the racism experienced by the middleclass doesn’t look like the racial oppression experienced in the past or even by working class and poor people of color; its manifestation is altogether different for middleclass Latinos. This is because they too live, work, and play in predominantly white spaces and once whites understand they are here “legally” or “supposed to be here” or are “middleclass too” then we see the manifestation of racism shift.

This is where I argue that class impacts racism or rather where race and class intersect. Class only impacts racism in its manifestation and nothing else. By this I mean that the racial structure shifts based on certain class dynamics for example education or income such that it no longer is experienced as normative oppression. The narrative of racism changes, as Feagin and Sikes point out, from “No Negroes” to “We’ll serve you but you have to take it to go” (1994). Many scholars have mistakenly argued this as a difference between overt and covert racism (Wilson 1978, Bonilla-Silva 2006, Coates 2007) however, the differences between overt and covert are irrelevant, because either manifestation leads to the same consequences—white oppression. Moreover arguments distinguishing between overt and covert racism detract from the way in which racism in any manifestation does damage to people of color.

Instead this discussion should be thought about as investigating how class impacts white oppression, because whites often understand class politics (notice that the 99% protest movement were predominantly whites protesting for class equality in 2012) they are less inclined to draw boundaries around these class based resources if the individual has the appropriate class markers (Lamont and Lareau 1988, Lamont 2000). However, because of the social footing becoming momentarily equal between Whites and Latino/a who are middleclass in terms of class status, whites must redraw the lines of othering along race. Because these individuals cannot be interpreted as undeserving poor, they instead are viewed as fellow middleclass and whites must rearticulate the racial hierarchy for these Latinos. This is clear as we see whites will call Blacks with white coded names for job interviews, and ultimately choose the white candidate with similar or the same credentials. What we see is a type of filtering effect with regard to social interaction and racial hierarchies where one must contain all the keys to access white coded resources and more often than not Latinos/as rarely or only momentarily have every key.

This understanding of white oppression and class in the United States is important for thinking about the Latino/a people in this research as it highlights how they experience their racial identities. Moreover it illustrates how they are directly impacted by the racial structures of the United States as these racial hierarchies shape their experiences as middleclass in ways that are altogether different from their white peers.



## **Accessing Middleclass Status: How Does Assimilation Fit?**

The Latino/a middleclass is something of a nebulous group because there are many ways in which we can and should talk about the middleclass. By this I mean there are numerous ways class can be measured and interpreted. In this section I provide a discussion of how I conceptualize class status for Latino/a people in this research and in doing this I locate this project in the literatures on upward mobility and assimilation.

Understanding the middleclasses has long been a focus of sociologists in the United States. Many times scholars have been interested in how this class status provides access to privileges and rights not afforded to those who are poor or working class. G. William Domhoff (1967) argued that in order to understand the power structures in the US we must “study up” that is look up on the social hierarchies to see how oppression is working. Prior to Domhoff’s arguments C. Wright Mills (1956) argued that there were few individuals who would have significant access to wealth and power in the US. His arguments have shaped understandings of how power and material realities are understood in studies of inequality. However scholarship such as this provided a grand narrative for thinking about inequality and failed to significantly account for the nuance of how people lived under these systems of oppression. This means these theories don’t account for the ways in which inequality intersects occurs on various axes—race, class, gender and sexuality all have different tiers in which privileges are awarded or denied (Crenshaw 1991, Hill Collins 2000).

Despite this if we look at Domhoff’s (1967) arguments we see that Middleclass Latinos have access to all the indicators of power that are necessary to access the higher

rungs of the racial hierarchy; access to governance, winners in some social issues, beneficiaries of social changes, and a building reputation for having social power. However, these indicators of power, though accessed by middleclass Latinos are always subject to white decisions about continued Latino access. This means that Domhoff's arguments about a blanket classed experience failed to account for the myriad ways in which social class is dependent on racial status. Domhoff and Mills early examinations of class status set the early critical tones for examining class inequality in the U.S. and provide significant details for thinking about how social power is asymmetrical and hierarchical.

Less than ten years after Domhoff published his arguments and twenty two years after Mills, William Julius Wilson makes his arguments about the how race. is no longer a significant factor impacting the experiences of Blacks in the US. Wilson's primary thesis is as follows,

My argument that race relations in America have moved from economic racial oppression to a form of class subordination for the less privileged blacks is not meant to suggest that racial conflicts have disappeared or have even been substantially reduced. On the contrary, the basis of such conflicts have shifted from the economic sector to the sociopolitical order and therefore do not play as great a role in determining the life chances of individual black Americans as in the previous periods of overt economic racial oppression (1980:23)

Wilson's focus falls in line with previous, Mills and Domhoff, macro-level theories about class inequality holding primacy over the racialized experiences (See Feagin 1991 for a thorough critique of Wilson's argument). Despite its significant and detrimental problems Wilson's argument documents some of the first discussions of the paths taken by middleclass people of color. His arguments begin to open a sociological interest and focus on what happens to people of color once social policies such as Jim Crow are altered and eradicated. Moreover, it moves the conversation from thoughts rooted in problematic assumptions about people of color as culturally and naturally inclined to this underclass status (Myrdal 1944) .

Despite these contributions Wilson's (also Domhoff and Mills) arguments are part of a long line of sociological analyses that have attempted to deny, mask or generally ignore the importance of race and white oppression. To truly understand Wilson's arguments we must first look at Robert E. Park's discussions of the assimilation theoretical frameworks (Feagin and Feagin 2011). This is because Wilson's arguments represent an attempt to move away from assimilation paradigms that fail to address the experiences of Black Americans (Wilson 1979, 1996). This movement represents new thought in the area of race and ethnicity and in many ways split the camp into several factions—assimilation frameworks, structural frameworks, and historical/ideological frameworks. Though not mutually exclusive, they all attempt to address how race is working in the US, but for what follows I will address only the assimilation paradigm in particular as it is the most significant for understanding the

intersection of race and class; this theory has been the primary means for thinking about how Latino/a people gain access to the middleclasses among contemporary scholars.

Robert Park's assimilation framework sets in motion work focusing on how immigrants and other racial and ethnic groups will eventually move into the mainstream American cultures. He defines assimilation as

[Assimilation is] [t]he name given to the process or processes by which people of diverse racial origins and different cultural heritages, occupying a common territory, achieve a cultural solidarity sufficient at least to sustain national existence...an immigrant is assimilated as soon as he has shown that he can 'get on in the country.' This implies among other things that in all the ordinary affairs of life he is able to find a place in the community on the basis of his individual merits without invidious or qualifying reference to his racial origin or to his cultural inheritance (Park 1950:281)

In his discussion Park argues for a "race relations cycle" wherein the individuals who are part of recent immigrant flows undergo several stages before becoming an assimilated part of US society. His four stages, contact, competition, accommodation and assimilation all highlight the primary means through which individuals eventually gain access to a mainstream, and importantly a middleclass life.

Central to his argument is that the practices of the individual are key for accessing a mainstream, which means immigrants and other racial and ethnic groups must find their *own* place in the community (also see Warner and Srole 1945). This is a

crucial element of Park's argument that organizes all assimilation frameworks that follow and inevitably puts Park and other assimilationists at odds with structural arguments about racial/ethnic inequality and white oppression. Under these frameworks the individual's agency is the primary organizing principal of American life. These theories ignore or indirectly address a few overt barriers to assimilation but largely deny the racialized organization of U.S. social systems. Fundamental to these theoretical frameworks is that the individual is in charge of his/her own destiny. This means that agency is what drives this theoretical paradigm, ignoring the way in which structures represent a significant element of how immigrants and other groups of color experience the US.

Additionally under Park's definition, there is significant room for interpretation as to what he means by "getting on in the country," however, I would argue this refers to accessing various forms of capital (Bourdieu 1984). Capital works much like the key or social lubricant enabling individuals access to various resources (Bourdieu 1984, Lamont 2002). Also the worth of capital varies based on who possesses it (in particular along racial lines), even if it is the same for both individuals and this worth for capital is ultimately organized by social structures of a given context (racial hierarchies/castes) (Feagin and Sykes 1994, Bolton and Feagin 2004). This means that "getting on in the country" is going to look different for different racial group; a crucial element overlooked by Park's assimilation framework.

With the introduction of Milton Gordon's (1964), model for ethnic assimilation we see the theory shaped by his data on white ethnics, Jews, Italians, and other European

immigrants. Like Park, Gordon centered his conclusions on a very specific path followed by immigrants for accessing assimilation and argued that immigrants all follow a straight line for assimilation passing through 7 stages each being required for the immigrant to be part of American society (1964). These stages of Assimilation are: cultural, structural, marital, identification, attitude-receptional, behavior-Receptional, and civic (1964:70). With each stage or position of assimilation the immigrants became that much closer to fully becoming part of an American white mainstream.

Park (1930) and Gordon (1964) guided sociological understandings of immigrant, racial and ethnic groups assimilation for the next three decades, but Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) challenged these arguments by questioning the extent to which individuals access the middleclasses only. Building on Edna Bonacich's (1972) theory of a split labor market wherein different ethnic groups have disproportionate access to 'better or worse' jobs. "The central hypothesis is that ethnic antagonism first germinates in a labor market split along ethnic lines. To be split a labor market must contain at least two groups of workers whose price of labor differs for the same work or would differ if they did the same work" (Bonacich 1972:549). Portes and Zhou (1993) argue that because of a labor market that differentially values the labor of different groups some of these groups do not assimilate in an upward fashion, instead they assimilate downward into the lower classes. This movement is among the first literature to show how racial structures impact and determine the extent to which immigrants and other people of color can assimilate.

However, this is the farthest we see the assimilation paradigm push the structural understandings of accessing material resources. Even “new assimilation theory” proposed by Alba and Nee (2003) fails to place race, white oppression, and systemic racism (Feagin 2006) as a centrally organizing element in the experiences of new immigrants and other groups of color. Instead we see a heavy movement back toward Park’s interpretation of individual actions shaping the latest incarnations of the assimilation paradigm.

Our theory of assimilation builds on the behavioral assumptions of the new institutionalism in sociology. Agents act according to mental models shaped by cultural beliefs—customs, social norms, law, ideology, and religion—that mold perceptions of self interest (Alba and Nee 2003:38).

Alba and Nee are arguing that their theoretical framework of new assimilation is one that holds at its center a theory of agency shaped by cultural beliefs. While cultural beliefs are certainly important for understanding how people act, they are, as many scholars have proven, more malleable than social structures and racial structures in particular (Goldberg 1993). Moreover, by centering cultural beliefs they decenter the ways in which whites practice of oppression, specifically, arguments about the cultural beliefs and cultural ideologies detract from the ways in which racism and oppression are lived and practiced in our everyday lives (Curry 2009). Moreover, Alba and Nee (2003) reorient the arguments such that a focus on white oppression and actions is ignored and racial inequality becomes a consequence of cultural deficits (Bonilla Silva 2006) on part of people of color.

My argument is that the theoretical, conceptual, and analytic logics of the assimilation theory require a specific conceptualization of agency. It becomes an agency that, while shaped by cultural beliefs and institutions, is nonetheless allows people of color to significantly change social structures. This conceptualization of agency is at best a misnomer with regard to the experiences of people of color and at worst a naïve attempt at masking racism experienced by people of color. If we think back to Sewell's conceptualization of agency as an ability to wield schemas (and resources) in a new context, he doesn't argue that this wielding necessarily means change it only means there is possibility for schemas to be reappropriated. In the case of this research this means that agency is in a sense a means by which people of color can reappropriate but rarely significantly change social structures (Bell 2004). This conceptualization of agency, ignores how white oppression shapes power relations, and shapes the forms that agency can take and become manifest for Latinas/os.

Saba Mahmood (2005), makes a similar argument in her book Politics of Piety as she argues that the head covering practices of Muslim women constitute agency, as an uncovered head wouldn't allow them to come to the table to negotiate with the patriarchs of their society. The practice of head covering on the surface may seem like acquiesce to patriarchal oppression, yet it actually provides these women with the key through which they can enter and negotiate space. For Latinos/as they too use similar practices to negotiate their racial selves under a system of oppression. Rather than the stereotypes or racial caricatures always defining who they are, they reappropriate, reuse, and reorganize their racial selves accordingly to avoid, deny, and try to redefine racist discourse,



stereotypes, and conceptualizations. Agency in their experiences can only be manifest in a constrained manner, not as it is explained by the assimilationists.

This means the use of an assimilation framework is limited for thinking about this project as it largely ignores the processes of racialization that impact Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as. With a heavy focus on agency based action it obscures how racism and racial oppression by whites organizes and structures the everyday experiences and imposes the identities of middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinos/as. Instead using a framework that conceptualizes the presence of a racial caste system that is hierarchical and I show that while movement occurs none of the respondents in this research participate in assimilation (Gordon 1964, Portes and Zhou 1991, Alba and Nee 2003). These respondents will use assimilation practices (Lacy 2007) to negotiate space that racializes them in an oppressive manner however they do not consider themselves to be assimilated. I elaborate on these practices in Chapters V and VI and further discuss the theoretical underpinnings later in this chapter.

### **The Latino/a Middleclass**

The literature addressing the Latino/a middleclass is quickly growing with numerous scholars addressing the experiences of this group. Many of these scholars draw on the aforementioned theories of assimilation, with a significant portion using either segmented assimilation or a version of new assimilation theory. Such a heavy focus however is not the entirety of the discussion on a Latino/a middleclass, and there are a few scholars who address racism and racial oppression (Davila 2008, Feagin and Cobas 2008, forthcoming, Cobas and Feagin 2008, Chavez 2011). Though there are

scholars and scholarship focused on race and white oppression none of them are focused on how these systems of oppression coupled with the middleclass status impact middleclass Latino/a racial identities. This section will address the contours of the literature on a Latino/a middleclass, keeping explicitly on track with research in sociology focusing on upwardly mobile and explicitly middleclass Latino/a groups.

In her 2008 book, Arlene Davila makes the convincing argument that the size of Latino middleclass is more of a myth than a reality. In fact she argues, using Kochar's (2004) pew report, that the Latino wealth distributions are heavily unequal among Latinos with many falling well below the middleclass. Citing Kochar (2004) she argues that 25% of the Latino population holds 93% of its wealth. We can surmise that only a quarter of the population comes close to the middleclass hardly a significant portion of the Latino/a population. This leaves approximately 39 million Latinos without access to the wealth that fosters generational upward mobility. However, she also notes that one of the most important problems plaguing Latino/a people in the literature is not necessarily wealth inequalities but the root problem of these inequalities—race (Davila 2008:44). She states, “The most troublesome problem, however, is that matters of race and ethnicity are effectively erased within discussion of class and mobility among Latinos. Statistically based and driven, [these discourse] divorce Latinos from the everyday experience of class and status” (2008:44).

For Davila, race is the single most significant factor impacting the Latino/a population (see Davila 2001, 2004) but this racialization isn't confined by class but instead must be recognized for all Latinos especially for the middleclasses. Her

argument holds a significant critical place for thinking about the Latino middleclass as much of this literature is split on how to address their experiences. In what follows I will discuss several frameworks for thinking about the middleclass Latino/a population but I will eventually come back to Davila (2008) and other race centric understandings of the Latino/a middleclass. These race-focused frameworks are the most congruent with the Latino/a experiences from my research.

Davila's arguments while not alone, reflect a much smaller portion of the literature on the middleclass, instead a large body of research stems from Wilsonian understandings of race being superseded by class status. These literatures largely assume that class status is a far more significant indicator than that of race, and more often center their discussions on the socioeconomic factors indicating Latino/a assimilation. Implicit in this literature is the focus on how the Latino/a population has become more like the middleclass white population.

In a 1996 report on the Latino/a middleclass prepared for the Pepperdine University Institute for Public Policy we see some of the first discussions of a Latino/a middleclass using 1980 and 1990 PUMS data (PUIPP 1996). In this report there is a discussion of how Middleclass Latinos/as will affect the economic, political, and cultural future of Southern California. Moreover this report concludes that,

Rather than a question of balkanization, the long-term prospectus tends to move towards one that may be described as regional *mestizo*-ization, that is, a tendency towards the integration of Latinos racially, socially, and economically into the broader regional society. Recent rapid increases in

naturalization rates, as noted earlier, also suggest that this population will soon have increasingly profound political impacts as well. Ultimately, all Southern Californians need to recognize that the fate of the Latino population, and particularly the middle class, will increasingly mirror that of the entire region. As demonstrated in this report, that may well bode far better for Southern California's future than many now commonly believe (PUIPP 1996:17).

The conclusion put forth in this report is that the Latino/a middleclass is growing and their presence in Southern California will also continue to grow. This report falls in line with the assimilation arguments (Portes and Zhou 1991) about upward mobility as the author argues that we see a "mestizo-ization" wherein the Latino/a population is 'integrating' into the mainstream racially, socially and economically. There is a conflation of social, cultural, and racial assimilation with economic measures of income, education, and home ownership parity with white southern Californians that leads some of the primary arguments made in this research toward the idea that Latino/a people are accessing the middleclass in significant numbers. Moreover, it assumes that just because Latinos/as have access to the middleclasses they are integrating or rather that that are able to access the white controlled resources required for integration.

In a similar report by leading social scientists, prepared for the Thomas Rivera Policy Institute using 1980 and 1990 PUMS data supplemented by 1996-99 Current Population Survey data, we see a similar conclusion. Like the earlier Pepperdine research these authors are equally optimistic about the growth and maturation of the

Latino/a middleclass. They argue that this growth represents a significant break from literature that argues for an oppressed Latino/a middleclass whose access to resources are regularly curtailed by racial inequalities. These authors argue that the Latino/a middleclass is a significant population, and their growth will only continue (TRPI 2001), an important contribution of this research report is that it highlights that from 1979-1989 Latino middleclass grew from 1.5 million to 2.7 million. This almost doubling of the middleclasses clearly illustrates this new up and coming Latino/a population.

However, Davila (2008) is unconvinced by the optimism of the TRPI report, and points out that the report itself highlights the significant income disparities between Latinos and Whites. Additionally, she argues that this report and others like it rely heavily on quantitative measures for thinking about the experiences of the Latino/a middleclass and though useful, these measures rarely (see Chapter III) address the way in which white racism impact the middleclass. This is why these reports convey a heavy sense of optimism regarding the Latino/a middleclass because, ‘the numbers show’ that the Latino middleclass has “moved on up.” Caution should be used with these conclusions, as we know that Latinos experiences vary based on skin tone, accent, citizenship and other phenotypical characteristics (Hunter 2005). Even the TRPI report provides us with a recommendation of “examining the economic situations of these [different Latino groups] separately, whenever possible” (TRPI 2001:42) is necessary for understanding these disparities. Though it isn’t made explicit by the authors of the TRPI report the effects of race certainly are visible and most notably among Mexican origin

Latinos who across the board are denied and disproportionately less represented among the middleclasses.

This downplaying of race and racial oppression is a common theme in the assimilation strain of literature on the Latino Middleclasses. Work by Jody Agius Vallejo (2009) highlights this point as she focuses on the ways in which Latinas incorporate and assimilate into predominantly white business communities. While Vallejo provides insight into their experiences she regularly denies or ‘writes off’ any moments where her own research may lead to a racialized understanding of this group of Latinos experiences (also see Emeka and Agius Vallejo 2011, Agius Vallejo 2012). She writes, “By following the theoretical model of the minority culture of mobility, I suspect that the ALB [the Latina organization she’s researching] might foster retention of a class-based ethnic identity rather than a white identity” (2009:133). She argues that rather than understand the ALB’s actions as racialized she argues that this is largely a class-oriented experience had by these middleclass Latinos. This argument enables an assimilation-oriented framework to fill in the cracks and explain the experiences of Latinos. Vallejo and other ethnicity and class scholars (Aranda 2007, 2008, Jimenez 2010, Macias 2003) create a tautological argument wherein the middleclass doesn’t experience racialization because they are middleclass.

Further entrenching this literature in arguments of assimilation and ideas of Latinos as an ethnic group rather than a racial group is Thomas Jimenez’s work on replenished ethnicity (2010). He draws on several indicators of Latinos assimilation into the mainstream: Hispanicity as symbolic (Tienda and Mitchell 2006), implemented and

effective affirmative action (Alba and Nee 2003), income and educational “progress” (Reed et. al. 2005, Smith 2003, 2006, Telles and Ortiz 2008), intermarriage i.e. marriage to whites (Macias 2006, Perlmann and Waters 2002, Rosenfield 2002), labor force participation or failure to assimilate to the underclass (Waldinger and Feliciano 2004, Waldinger, Lim and Cort 2007). However, each of these indicators of “progress”, doesn’t account for the ways in which race impacts the overall understanding of each indicator. For example, Telles and Ortiz (2008) argue that the changes among the Mexican origin population are overall improving (also see Jimenez 2010:18) but they also recognize that these Latinos experience decreases in educational and occupational attainment after the second-generation experiences spikes in these measures. Telles and Ortiz conclude, somewhat reluctantly, that this ultimately reflects racial discrimination that hinders the experiences of these Latinos (2008). However, Jimenez provides a cursory mention of Telles and Ortiz’s (2008) significant findings, instead focusing on the overall improvement the middleclass represents rather than looking at how the trends in the 3<sup>rd</sup> plus generations are bleak at best.

In an earlier study focused on Mexican ethnic Latinos/as by Thomas Macias takes on a tone similar to Jimenez with the denial of racial castes and oppression as significant factors shaping the lives of Latinos. Though Macias does account for what he terms assigned identities the majority of his analysis is constrained by the use of the concept of ethnicity. Like other scholars using these paradigms a focus on ethnicity, a term created to describe whites who were not from England (Park 1950, Gordon 1964, Waters 1999). As these whites were able to assimilate into the mainstream white

population sociology began to argue that this meant that ethnicity was a malleable experience. Under these arguments using concepts such as ethnicity we see that the logic carries over to Latinos/as as an ethnic group; like whites they too can move into the white mainstream (Waters and Jimenez 2005). Though Macias (2006) attempts to skirt this constraint by stating that an ethnic identity can either be assigned or asserted, he still fails to account for how phenotype and other racial characteristics shape the lives of these individuals. His recognition is as follows,

One of the more striking aspects of Mexican ethnicity among most of the people I interviewed was the degree to which it felt constrained by the expectations of non-Mexican Americans...most of the people I interviewed...could point to at least one instance in their lives where there appeared to be a troublesome mismatch between the respondents sense of what it meant to be Mexican American and what a non-Mexican American thought it meant to be Mexican American” (2006:95)

For Macias racial oppression and experiences with racial othering are minimized as a “troublesome mismatch” between how they are perceived by “non-Mexican Americans” and who they feel they are. Macias minimizes a clearly significant element of Mexican Ancestry Latino/a identities, experiences with racial oppression.

In line with these other scholars focusing on how Latino/a groups are an ethnic group is Agius Vallejo’s (2012) work on Mexican American ethnic groups. Her focus is specifically on how these Latino/a ethnics incorporate into the US and argues that their middleclass status is a significant indicator of this incorporation. Agius Vallejo’s work is



among the first to focus explicitly on the middleclass experiences had by these Latinos/as. Unfortunately she ignores the way in which these experiences are impacted by histories and processes of racialization. Instead as I mentioned in my discussions of Davila's critique of the TRPI report, she tends to focus on the claimed growth and improvement in the lives of Latinos/as. Her analysis provides significant insight, being that it's the first of its kind, into the middleclass' experiences.

Yet, the significant problems with her research don't necessarily lie in her data or even in the experiences of Latinos/as she presents. Rather its what she ignores and omits that prove to be far more detrimental to her analysis. Early in her discussion she lets the reader know where her blind spots will be, "The book details the variations in experiences and incorporation pathways among middle-class Mexican Americans, variations that are largely structured by class background" (2012:4). Like other scholars she shelves the primacy of race and racialization for a focus on class status. Stating that class is the most significant factor organizing the experiences of middleclass Mexican Americans. She continues, "A consistent problem in research on Mexican Americans is a lack of attention to issues of class and the ways in which class background affects different spheres of social life and mobility pathways" (2012:4). While I do agree class is a problem that is under investigated I disagree that it should come at the expense of analyses accounting for racial oppression. I argue instead that class while important is not the most significant factor organizing these Latinos/as lives, we should recognize that though the salience of class may be high in one instance in the next many of my respondents were just a 'random Mexican on the street' (see Chapter V for full quote).

This quick movement between minimally racialized to highly racialized was very common and lead many Latinos to encounter, as Macias called them a, “troublesome mismatch” or, as I prefer, processes of racialization.

Agius Vallejo represents a culmination of literature beginning at the end of the millennium centered on illustrating choosing to focus on the “positives instead of the negatives’ when it comes to research on Latinos/as in the US. These scholars have paid their own communities a significant disservice as their work becomes fodder for the dismantling of very much needed affirmative action programs. Their conclusions, much like Wilson’s (1979), prove that race is no longer an issue for Latinos. Conclusion such as the following made by Agius Vallejo (2012), “In fact, many [Mexican Americans respondents] live their everyday lives as middle-class whites” (178). Agius Vallejo argues that these individuals live their everyday lives not as racial others, but rather as whites, despite living in hostile racial climates of their cities and country that regularly espouse racist discourse, legislation, and popular culture signifying their otherness. Scholarship such as Agius Vallejo ignores structural and systemic racism, instead choosing to focus on the positive growth of the Latino/a middleclasses.

Scholars who study the Latino/a middleclass and focus on assimilation and ethnicity represent a significant portion of the literature. While their arguments highlight a much needed area of research, their reliance on ethnic assimilation theoretical frameworks cloud their final conclusions about the middleclass. While I don’t think their goals of highlighting, perhaps even helping, the Latino/a middleclass are different from race-based research on Latinos/as, their focus misses the depth to which these Latinos/as

experience oppression. Much of these scholars arguments are in response to larger discourse about Latino/a people as a threat (Chavez 2008) whereby they believe their research to be highlighting the positive growth of Mexican American community. Macias (2003), Jimenez (2010), Agius Vallejo (2012) have made this their starting point as they all make this argument early in their introductions. Organizing research under these frameworks neglects the reality of racial oppression, as it masks the everyday element of racialization. In fact taking this approach of positive growth of the Mexican American middleclass necessitates that racial oppression be hidden. Racial oppression does not lead to a thriving and successful middleclass, instead it leads to one that is, at every turn, struggling to keep their ever tenuous footing in a place where they are often told they are unwanted. Assimilation and ethnicity based scholarship in the end only does the community a disservice as it ignores the ugly truth of racial oppression; that it distorts and mutates the middleclass experiences of Latinos/as, making their racial identities indecipherable when compared to who they feel they actually are.

Fortunately these assimilation and ethnicity scholars are not alone in addressing the experiences of middleclass Latinos/as. Joe Feagin and Jose Cobas (2008, forthcoming, also Cobas and Feagin 2008), Arlene Davila (2001, 2008), Maria Chavez (2011) represent a race critical analyses that highlight that the middleclass may not be the Shangri-La assimilation scholars have purported. In fact these race focused scholars have adeptly highlighted the way in which the middleclasses must make difficult decisions, endure painful humiliation, and generally be excluded after years of hard work all because of racial oppression. This scholarship provides the groundwork for this

dissertation and ultimately informs the conceptual and analytic directions of imposed and negotiated identities.

Arlene Davila's (2001) seminal book *Latinos INC.* shows how the US marketing industry that is gearing itself toward the increasing size of the Latino/a population. She highlights how these agencies employ and think about the Latino/a middleclass much more frequently than in the past. She is critical of how these corporations target the Latino/a population through the use of subcontracts with Latino/a specific organizations or through large advertising agencies with a Latino/a division. She links these critiques with a heavy focus on how race is portrayed in these advertisements, as caricatures that, I would add, play into larger narratives about Latino/a racial identities. Her arguments represent some of the early research investigating the Latino/a middleclasses as she uncovers the discourse and practices that made the middleclass a market worthy of corporate attention. However, this book's most important contribution to the research on the Latino/a middleclass is not its critique of racism in marketing but rather on the way in which the idea of middleclass Latino/a growth was created by marketing agencies. It illustrates that the middleclass didn't merely arise but rather was something that had to be sculpted by marketers looking to sell products.

In Davila's (2008) analysis of the middleclasses she is able to now question the true growth of this group, and ultimately concludes that the Latino/a middleclass is not as large or thriving as past research and marketers claimed. While she does admit growth overall, this growth must be taken into account along side the marginality that the middleclasses also experience. She states, "I have repeatedly shown throughout this

work , as a group that is at once both living and socially imagined, Latinos continue to occupy a marginal position in society, even when they are joining the ranks of mainstream culture” (2008:161). Davila captures the complexity of Latino/a middleclasses experience as a group that is simultaneously part of the mainstream yet still racially marginalized. Her analysis takes on the discourse and research, such as Macias (2006), Jimenez (2010) and Agius Vallejo (2012), by illustrating that positive accounts don’t negate racial oppression. Yet, much of Davila’s research while extremely insightful lacks in addressing exactly how Latinos/as experience their everyday lives and the racial oppression in this context.

Maria Chavez (2011) provides a significant amount of discussion of how racism is an everyday experience for the Latino/a middleclass. Her research examines the experiences of Latino/a professionals specifically uses Latino/a lawyers who live in Washington state as her case study. Chavez’s research uses Feagin’s (2010) concept of the “white racial frame” to understand how these Latino/a people are racialized in their everyday lives. Chavez’s research can be thought of as being very similar to Agius Vallejo’s work in that it aims to elaborate on the experiences of Latinos/as who are upwardly mobile or middleclass.

However, she takes a significant detour from the heavily traveled road of ethnic labels and assimilation theories, and provides vignettes and narratives highlighting how Latino/a professionals experience racism and racial oppression at the hands of their white colleagues, friends, and neighbors. This is important as previous research fails to account for this everyday racial oppression, often only looking at the aggregate or broad

picture of educational attainment, income, home ownership and occupational prestige. While these factors are important they do not address how race comes to impact middleclass Latinos/as. Chavez clarifies this with three major points about Latino professionals,

(1) Latinos remain marginalized, even as they gain educational and economic parity with white professionals; (2) popular notions of a color-blind society and the push for color-blind policies do not work in a society that remains racially unequal; (3) despite these circumstances Latino professionals use their expertise and training in the law to become civically, professionally, and politically engaged in ways they could not have been without their professional credentials and status (2010:158).

For Chavez the middleclass, as Davila (2008) noted as well, continues to be marginalized and excluded. For Chavez this is largely because the policy and legislation enacted in the US to alleviate this marginalization has not comprehensively addressed racialization. These two points of marginalization and failed policy leave Latinos/as mired in a racial other position and ultimately denies them true access to the white coded resources their white peers have available. Her third point is important because it addresses what it means to have access to the middleclass and it addresses some of the problematic assumptions posited in the ethnic and assimilation scholarship. For Chavez having access to white coded middleclass resources, such as education and other credentials, does not mean these individuals are assimilated. Rather for Chavez it only

represents that too few Latino/a people are accessing resources that all Latino/a people deserve.

Like Chavez and Davila, Feagin and Cobas' research on the Latino/a middleclass, brings a critical lens to focus on the experiences of the middleclass. They discuss key understandings of how race and racialization are significant elements for Latino/a people. They highlight how language (Cobas and Feagin 2008) oppression is manifest for middleclass Latinos/as. Specifically they point out how whites oppress Latinos through the curtailment of deploying Spanish. This framework provides a direct understanding of how I think about the deployment of racial identities for middleclass Latinos/as. As Cobas and Feagin note,

The common goal in the language-control methods of whites is to disparage the language of Latinos. The methods follow a variety of strategies. Some are aimed at Latinos' use of English: asking participants to stop speaking Spanish, because 'English' is the language of the land or because the white interlocutors want to know 'what's going on', and ignoring Latinos who speak Spanish. Other forms of control are deriding Latinos' accents, raising questions about their proficiency in English when Latinos demonstrate skill. Whites define Latino speech as tainted in two senses. First, when Latinos speak Spanish they are using a language that 'does not belong' in the United States and may be saying things behind whites' backs. Second, when they speak English, their accent is inferior and does not belong. Whites see themselves as the authorities to

adjudicate language use. Attempts to control Latinos' language or disparage it often provoke responses from the Latinos involved in the interaction or witnessing it. (2008:395).

Among the first scholars to argue that the Latino/a middleclass is exposed to whites more than working class or poor Latinos/as because of high levels of segregation in US cities they are able to vividly illustrate the consequences of this segregation. They argue that the middleclass experiences racialization at every single moment of their lives. The deployment of Spanish is just such an instance where this everyday racialization occurs for the middleclasses. Moreover it highlights the arguments made in this research as well, as language itself is an identity practice. As an identity practice language lets every person in the space know that whomever is using the language is Latino/a and in the minds of many whites, non-citizens as well. They illustrate that this language, I would add that its part of identity, deployment racializes Latino/a people as the non-citizen self (see Chapter VI for an elaboration). They also point out that all Latinos/as experience this non-citizenship, well as classic racist tropes of inferiority, (Chapters IV, V, and VI) and general racialized othering by whites (Chapters IV and VI). Like Chavez and Davila, Cobas and Feagin recognize that these practices represent the racial barriers Latino/a people must encounter everyday.

However, Feagin and Cobas (2008) make a slightly different argument about the middleclasses as they address assimilation and incorporation frameworks. Instead of recognizing the practices of assimilation as positive they illustrate how these practices, they term internalization of white racial framing, they show that assimilation practices



are more often problematic. They argue that assimilation actually manifests itself as “consent to white racial framing” of situations and contexts that privilege whiteness and facilitate the racialization of people of color. This is congruent with Sewell’s arguments about reappropriation of racial structures where we see that these Latino/a people are able to reuse previously white only resources, such as the white racial frame, for their own ends. Feagin and Cobas (2008) conclude that this has extremely detrimental effects for the Latinos who use these framings as they come to believe them as a reality. This internalization and belief further solidifies racial hierarchies wherein Latino/a people are able to distance their racial identities from Black Americans giving them some semblance of social mobility on the racial hierarchy.

Building on their previous research on the Latino/a middleclasses Feagin and Cobas (forthcoming) once again address how processes of racialization are occurring in the everyday lives of Latino/a people. They investigate how the middleclass experiences racial oppression in their new book that draws on nationwide interviews with Latinos/as. Their project addresses how these individuals experience racial oppression despite arguments about assimilation and incorporation as the authors show through numerous respondent statements that racism is very much a daily part of the lives of the middleclass. One of the key elements that Feagin and Cobas introduce is that racial identities are imposed on the Latino/a middleclass (see Feagin 2010) by whites. They state, “if you are an American of color, the white-imposed definition of your racial identity plays out as you maneuver through the societal worlds outside home and community” (Feagin and Cobas forthcoming:16). They argue that the middleclasses are

the direct recipients of white identity impositions, which are the consequence of centuries of racialization and racial histories.

Research on the Latino/a middleclass is organized into two different understandings of how they experience life in the United States: racialized or assimilated. The literature on assimilation has significant problems as it largely neglects the way in which race is ever present in the daily life of Latino/a people; with a heavy focus on ethnicity and the malleability of this identity. The race literatures of course, account for this but few have dedicated significant time and analysis to the way in which racial identities are formed for the middleclass. Instead this is often given a short paragraph or two and while this is better ignoring race altogether, as it is by the ethnic/assimilation literature, it nonetheless must be examined further. Moreover none of the race-focused literature has a heavy focus on Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as instead opting to investigate all Latino/a groups. While there is certainly utility in this practice, it often has a blanketing effect that misses how the histories of different Latino racial groups have impacted their racial identities. The assimilation literature, however, does account for the specificities of Mexican Ancestry Latinos however, as I stated doesn't account for this as a racial identity only as an ethnicity. This neglect has a similar effect to the blanketing of history of the racial frameworks as it masks the complexities of oppression.

In the section that follows I provide a brief overview of how this project conceptualizes identities and in particular racial identities. Accounting for Feagin's (2010) concept of an imposed identity, I delve into the ways in which identity is used

and theorized in this dissertation. Because this literature is very large I focus primarily on the literature that shapes this project: Symbolic Interactionist and Identity Theory interpretations of identities as accomplished and the structural arguments of identities as imposed.

### **Identities: Imposed and Achieved**

To briefly conclude this discussion of the literatures shaping this dissertation I will focus on how I conceptualize identities, as this is the crucial element for thinking about how Latino/a people experience their everyday. As Omi and Winant (1997) noted, our identities are significant as they shape our existence at every moment of our lives, in fact I argue that they are our existence in every moment of our lives. For middleclass Latinos/as their existences are routinely formed and shaped by the processes of racialization present in the United States. However, how this occurs is unclear in the literature on the Latino/a middleclass and I will show that the literature on how identities are imposed and accomplished can provide some insight into this neglected conversation.

Though it isn't originally Mead's concept, the "I" and the "me" (James 1892) are important for understanding identity in this research. I use Mead as his conceptualizations are far more discursive than that of James and it is this discursive conceptualization that lends itself to narrative conceptualizations of the self and identity used in Chapters V and VI. Understanding the discursive elements of the "I" and the "me" has a significant impact for thinking about racial identities. In this project I focus on how the narratives of the self (I) and imposed narratives (me) shape the overall

understanding of Latino/a people's identities. Mead (1934) has a very clear conceptualization of the "I" and the "me;" "the 'I' is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the 'me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes" (175). Using his framework to think about the racial selves of Latino/a people our "I" is that which we deploy in response to the racial discourse, climates, hierarchies and structures acting on us; while the "me" is the manifestation of these impositions of a self that is proposed for us.

Crucial here is that Mead also argues that we "assume" or take on the impositions of the "me." Unpacking what Mead means by "assuming" I believe he is arguing for what I discuss as the reappropriation of racial impositions of the self or more broadly defined its Mead's conceptualization of agency. Specifically for this research it illustrates how he is accounting for the strategies of identity negotiation. More current arguments about this strategizing or negotiation are present in Identity Theory (Stryker 1968, Burke and Reitzes 1981, Stryker and Burke 2000). These authors argue that the 'roles' are negotiated and strategically acted by people. While I believe that this strategizing and negotiation is occurring for the Latino/a middleclass, however, I do not think it is occurring in exactly the same manner that is elaborated upon by Identity Theory (Stryker and Burke 2000). Instead I argue that these Latino/a people utilize a second nature (Bourdieu 1977) conceptualization of the self. This means that the strategies described by Identity Theory are largely, though not completely, practiced in an "unconscious" manner (Bourdieu 1977). I do think that these individuals do practice

their racial selves in purposeful ways but never are they at every instance strategizing about their racial identity presentation.

Moreover a central issue with the arguments of role negotiation is its neglect for the elements of structural racialization. I argue that these constraints are significant and in many instances significantly shape how identities are negotiated. Because much of this theory among other identity theory, build on early social psychology especially but not limited to G.H. Mead, their arguments reflect his equally shortsighted statements about the significant impact of the “me” (in this case racial structure). Structural arguments about race and racialization are clear that oppression is manifest for people of color everywhere and everyday, and our practices of the self are shaped by these constraints. Transgressions of the imposed racial self are often quickly subdued and policed by whites and sometimes other people of color. Despite its drawbacks the Identity Theory understandings of strategies/negotiations are central for thinking about how the Latino/a middleclasses react to these racial oppressions. It’s also fundamental for thinking about how agency arises in the face of racial oppression.

Another significant element of this negotiation is that it illuminates the idea that the self is a combination of achieved and ascribed narratives about Latinos/as. Borrowing from Symbolic interactionist, in particular Erving Goffman (1959), arguments about an accomplished self, I argue that middleclass racial selves are accomplished through nimble negotiations of racial hierarchies. Though Goffman doesn’t address race or structural inequality directly he does recognize that there is an element of the “me” shaping all of our identities. His discussion of “performance teams”

highlights how our self-presentations are dependent on other individuals and this is equally the case for the middleclasses (1959:79). The Latino/a racial selves that are constituted in these interactions are largely controlled by whites which means that their abilities to access the white team requires their deployment of specific racial selves namely those congruent with white controlled racial hierarchies—I argue that Goffman (1959) fails to account for the way in which social power shapes our presentation of self.

However, the symbolic interactionist (and ethnomethodological) tradition didn't remain stagnant and several discussions account for how we present our self in the face of oppression. This literature focused on how we do or practice racial (or gendered or sexual) selves. Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker (1995) show that race like gender and class, are accomplished through interactional moments. Explicitly stating, “race is not simply an individual characteristic or trait but something that is accomplished in interaction with others” (West and Fenstermaker 1995:23). This means that race arises only in the context of interaction, interaction can of course be manifest in many ways, but it nonetheless is required for race to exist. Heritage (1984) underscores this in his discussion of social action as an account.

Aware, in locally particularized ways, of the promise and troubles inherent in the possibilities of circumstantial elaboration, actors may be seen to design their accounts with respect to a range of ‘considerations’ and exigencies.’ The latter may be particular to the specific participants, or generic to particular kinds of activities...or indeed institutional in that actors may refer to common understandings of the possible uses and fates

of accounts-within-classrooms, accounts-within-courtrooms, news interviews, bureaucratic agencies and so on (177).

This means that the way in which we practice our selves is dependent on the circumstances or contexts in which we are currently living in. This means that our racial selves are dependent on the racial contexts in which we live; in the case of this research I use Phoenix and San Antonio as contexts. The social interactions we have in these spaces shape how we conceptualize our racial identities and for the Latino/a middleclasses as they attempt to negotiate the racial climates and structures of their everyday lives in Phoenix and San Antonio.

One key element that must be noted from Heritage's statements about circumstance is that he has a much heavier reliance upon the discursive elements of how we understand our selves. While West and Fenstermaker talk about all action impacting our racial selves and experiences, Heritage argues that the narratives or accounts (he draws on Scott and Lyman (1968) to understand how selves are negotiated. This reliance on the discursive illustrates how our everyday talk and discourse are significant for our conceptualizations of the self. Previous scholars spoke generally about action or rather interaction but rarely focused explicitly on the discourse itself. Holstein and Gubrium (2000a, 2000b) argue that this narration is important as it is what constitutes the self, rather than action or interaction. To be clear they are not arguing that action and interaction are not important but rather they realize that the discourse around us shapes us significantly. They make the crucial distinction between discourse that is acting on individuals and discourse that is produced by individuals naming each respectively

discourse-in-practice and discursive practice (2000b). Each they argue, is important in conceptualizing the selves we have available and deploy in various contexts. It is through these interpenetrating and intersecting manifestations of discourse that our selves are constituted.

For the Latino/a middleclass this is where they too see their selves constituted, in these interactional moments where the discourse-in-practice meet the discursive practices of the self. Holstein and Gubrium (2000b) argue that it is in these discursive intersections that the self is constituted. “Deploying a discourse of subjectivity is not simply a matter of representing the subject but of simultaneously constituting the subject that are meaningfully embedded in the discourse itself. Discourse is not more or less correlated with what it represents but is ‘always already’ a form of life...” (Holstein and Gubrium 2000b:93). This means that in the discursive intersections the self is not merely represented by the discourse but rather is constituted of the discourse. Identities are discursive and they are the discourse itself.

This means that the narratives discussed in this research are constitutive of the racial selves for these Latino/a people. Their identities are combinations of discourses-in-practice and discursive practice that occur at the intersection of everyday life. The middleclasses deploy strategies to negotiate the discourse-in-practice and these strategic deployments are themselves manifestations of their discursive practices of the self. Middleclass Latinas/os narratives provided by their interviews illustrate a unique combination of both the discourse in practice and the discursive practice they live, and this constitutes “who they are” not one or the other. While their lives are subject to the



consequences of imposed identities these impositions are not constituted of all of their racial self. As Feagin and Cobas (forthcoming) note in their research on the Latino/a middleclass, “group and individual racial identities involve both externally imposed and the sometimes conflicting internalized identities” (15). The individuals in this research are the same, as those in Feagin and Cobas’ research, and their racial selves are constituted at the intersection of imposition and practice.

### **Conclusion**

As Jose Hernandez inspires more Latinos/as to become astronauts and as Julian Castro is mayor of the 7<sup>th</sup> largest city in the US it seems as though Latino/a people have “made it.” We’ve overcome our migrant worker, working class, immigrant, peone roots and ‘moved on up to an apartment in the sky.’ However, as I’ve noted in the beginning of this dissertation as well as in the literatures discussed herein, class status doesn’t equate to the complete mitigation of an experience with racial inequality and oppression. This chapter provided the background and support for this argument as well as highlighting what this means for how Latino/a people’s identities are manifest in their everyday lives.

I provided a detailed, though by no means exhaustive, narrative for thinking about common arguments encountered in the discussions of the Latino/a middleclasses. Starting very broadly with a discussion about how I think about race and racial inequality in sociology and moving to a narrower discussion about experiences of Latinos; eventually ending on a discussion of the middleclass and how I conceptualize their racial identities. I lay the groundwork for thinking about not just middleclass

Latino/a people but how they experience significant racial oppression despite seemingly living the ‘American dream.’ Normative discourse about the middleclass states that it is the reason why people immigrate to the US, however, little discussion of what happens once one makes it to the middleclass occurs in mainstream media discourse. Moreover, beyond media discourse I show that even those who are middleclass are dumbstruck by the realities of racial oppression they must endure. Focusing on their identities illustrates just how they are truly constrained as they are regularly denied who they want to be or think they are; many scholars argue that Whiteness never have to question their whiteness but Latino/a people must always confront their racial selves as it is always subject to white oppression and control

In the chapters that follow I provide an understanding of just how deep this white oppression runs in the two cities of Phoenix and San Antonio. I argue that all Latinos/as, including the middleclasses cannot escape these racializations as they have permeated the very fabric of the social, cultural, economic and even the spatial elements of their everyday space. The next chapter will focus on how I accessed the Latino/a people, chose the two cities and examined the data to come to these conclusions.

CHAPTER III  
DATA SAMPLING, METHODOLOGY, INTERVIEWING, AND ANALYZING  
MIDDLECLASS LATINO/A EXPERIENCES

**Introduction**

The primary focus of this project is in the three research questions that all address the ways Middleclass Mexican ancestry Latino/a people experience processes of racialization in the formation of their identities. However, each question relies on certain assumptions about the data's ability to address each of these questions. This chapter directly illustrates why middleclass Mexican ancestry Latino/a people are the primary focus for this project and why they are best suited for answering these research questions. Moreover it will address the methods of data collection, and how I approached gathering and obtaining interviews with these Latino/as. It will also focus on how I analyzed these data sources, and why each of these methods of data analysis are best suited to addressing the research questions.

Typically survey methodologies goal is to provide, generally speaking, a wide swath of representativeness regarding the population under investigation. That is, the goals of large sample surveys are to obtain a representative sample of the population, and provide the researcher with the ability to generalize all findings in the research—this is accomplished through probability sampling (Groves et. al. 2004). This has proven an effective method for understanding aggregate movement in the data as well as for providing researchers the ability to predict the changes in populations. These methods,

like all methods, are driven by the questions the researchers are asking. Often this means these questions typically ask about the correlation between different variables of a given population and from the results of statistical analysis this correlation is either proven or not proven. Either way the researcher is able to understand and make inferences about the larger social world given these results.

This dissertation moves in a different direction, and while utilizing similar methods of inference as well as similar assumptions about populations, it doesn't strive for generalizability in the same manner as survey methods. Instead because the research questions are focused on everyday processes and narratives of identity production, this project addresses how inequality is negotiated in social contexts. This means that this project assumes that racism and oppression at the hands of whites are an everyday reality for Latino/a people living in the Southwestern US ( Montejano 1987, Acuna 2003, Inda 2000, Santa Ana 2003).

With this assumption in mind, this dissertation moves in an ethnomethodological direction with the focus on how identities are accomplished and structured during this everyday racialization (Garfinkel 1967)—or to be clear I focus on the production processes of racial identities. This dissertation is not about illustrating the existence of racism by whites but rather assumes that this white perpetrated racism exists in the everyday lives of middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinos. With this as the starting point understanding how they experience this racism is what follows in this analysis. Additionally, ethnomethodology enables an elaboration on how these experiences occur in their lives. Gubrium and Holstein describe this as follows “ethnomethodologists aim

to describe the natural as a matter *in the making*” (1997:38). This project follows this methodology by describing identities as equally in process or in the making.

One of the best means for understanding how identities are processes in the making is to garner thick description (Geertz 1973) of everyday social interaction. In this dissertation thick description is accomplished through the deployment of various qualitative methodologies. Because of this project’s focus on identities, narratives, and practices I use interviews and descriptive analysis to provide the depth or thickness rather than the wide swath that is accomplished by survey methodologies. Understanding the processes of racial identity construction require more than basic answers to the question of “what is your race?” it requires detail about how this question is conceptualized by the respondent in multiple spaces (physical, social cultural), contexts and in relation to other people.

### **Latinos/as from Phoenix and San Antonio: Sampling and Demographics**

Using ethnomethods as a broad methodological frame means the sampling method must be pointed to explicitly address this racial oppression by whites and production of Latino/a identities (Garfinkel 1967). Drawing detailed understandings about Latinos/as in the U.S. is a complex process as our racial identities are drawn from a myriad of other intersecting experiences (Crenshaw 1991, Collins 2000, Brunσμα, Delgado, Rockquemore forth coming). However, this intersection doesn’t preclude the ability to understand the factors that are directly impacting this process of racial identity formation in specific contexts, in this case San Antonio and Phoenix. It does mean that the selection process for the sample required thinking about cities, and the specificities

of spaces within those cities; specifically, it required thought about where the sample will be drawn. San Antonio and Phoenix represent two cities that have long histories of Mexican Ancestry Latino presence and they also continue to have a significant first generation population; it is because of this combination of established and new Mexican ancestry populations that made these two cities the ideal sites for research on the middleclasses.

### *Selecting Second Cities*

San Antonio and Phoenix have similar population sizes 1.3 million and 1.5 million respectively, making each part of the 10 largest cities in the United States. Moreover each of these cities has a significant Latino/a population with Phoenix's Latino population standing at 40.8% and San Antonio at 63.2% (US Census Quick Facts). Each has a significant population exceeding or matching their respective state populations and almost doubling and quadrupling the national population averages. While these populations are different they nonetheless represent an upper limit with regard to Latino/a populations of large cities in the US. Of the cities with the largest Latino/a populations in the United States these two spaces represent the fourth and sixth largest Latino metropolises (Ennis et. al. 2010). Often much of our research on Latino/a people centers on very large city spaces such as New York (1<sup>st</sup> largest), Los Angeles (2<sup>nd</sup> largest) or Houston (3<sup>rd</sup> largest) (Ennis et. al. 2010) instead, the selection of San Antonio and Phoenix represents a selection of second cities or those that are less often studied because they don't have the overall population numbers that these top three have. However of the top 10 cities Phoenix and San Antonio are demographically more

representative of the remaining 6 largest Latino cities. This means that these cities can provide insight for approximately 29% of the Latino/a people living in the top ten most Latino/a populated cities in the United States.

Moreover in cities such as Phoenix and San Antonio (and the other 6 mentioned by Ennis et al 2011), contain different cultural dynamics than cities such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Chicago as they are cities that are predominantly Latino and White. According to the US Census, in Phoenix 46.5% and 40.8% of the population are white (non-Latino) and Latino respectively, which means that a significant portion of the population constitutes these two groups (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>). San Antonio is similar with 26.6% and 63.2% being White and Latino/a (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>) . This means these cities represent unique cultural spaces, though they are equally impacted by the processes of racialization present in the US, in particular systemic white oppression, their cultural climates represent a unique break from other cities as their demographics change the ways this racism manifests itself<sup>11</sup> (see Chapter IV).

In addition to these demographics impacting how racism is manifest, it also impacts how class operates in each of these cities. In cities such as Phoenix and San Antonio there are Latino communities that have been present for a significant amount of time. The presence of these communities for generations (some of my own interviewees

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<sup>11</sup> I want to be clear this doesn't mean that white oppression has disappeared rather, I'm only stating that the ways in which whites racialize Latinos/as differs from the way in which they racialize other people of color. Especially because of the different histories that have shaped the racialized experiences of each group, there are different dynamics shaping our experiences. Finally, I do recognize that processes of racialization are rarely creative endeavors and often draw of the same tired narratives about Blacks and use them to oppress Latinos and vice a versa and I don't want to deny that processes of racialization are similar for all oppressed racial group in some ways as well.

accounts trace their roots back over 500 years), yields a presence of a middleclass that is unique when compared with other cities (Oberle and Arreola 2008, Oberle 2008, Ramos 2008, Montejano 2010). In fact this middleclass experience in these two cities represents a long-standing presence of a Latino/a middleclass for both of these cities (Garcia 1991, Dimas 1999, Macias 2006). This means that these cities represent a space ripe for understanding the formation of a middleclass Mexican American population.

After living in these city spaces for 6 months each, I came to understand the social, cultural, economic and political climates well. Generally speaking these two cities despite their large Latino/a presence, are extremely hostile to the Latino/a community irrespective of class status. Pinning down this hostility was difficult as it was manifest in a plethora of news articles, legislation, and economic/social/political/cultural/spatial relations in the city. However, I eventually realized that there were two ever present elements in both of these cities that regularly dominated media and my ethnographic conversations. In San Antonio it was the Alamo and in Phoenix it was Sheriff Joe Arpaio and his Sheriff's office.

Choosing the Alamo website and Maricopa County Sheriff's office press releases was done largely because of their overt illustration of how racism becomes normative in cities such as Phoenix and San Antonio. They are by no means meant to be representative of the entirety of the racial climate of each city, however, they do represent a large vocal (discursive and narrative) space in the context of Phoenix and San Antonio.



Sheriff Joe Arpaio and his office have come to occupy a significant amount of media space in Phoenix (nationally as well). His press releases are often published in the local newspapers highlighting his stance on immigration, imprisonment of suspected criminals, and many other white supremacist and neo-conservative agendas. His presence is a ubiquitous one in the context of Phoenix and all of my respondents knew exactly who he was and what his political stances were with regard to Latino/a people.

The Alamo webpage was chosen because it offered a definitive narrative about Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as living/occupying San Antonio but also nationally. Though it could be argued that the website itself is not regularly viewed by San Antonio residents (white or Latino/a), it nonetheless discursively illustrates long held understandings about the Alamos role and presence in San Antonio. This means that while the discourse of the Alamo website might be read more often by non-residents or tourists, it clearly highlights the larger narrative about the Alamo in the Alamo City present in the space.

The discourse in both of these cities represent a general understanding of who Latino/a people are expected to be in the context of these cities. While again, they don't necessarily represent every available discourse for understanding Latino/a people they do represent the egregious racist narratives shaping Latino/a peoples everyday lives. The Latinos/as living in these cities regularly must negotiate the specter of these racist discourse in their everyday lives. These discursive specters create racial climates that directly impact how these Latino/a people understand their racial identities to which they in turn deploy practices to mitigate, deflect, and deny these narratives. Moreover, their

racial identities are often reluctantly highlighted by the respondents for fear of being grouped in with these racist interpretations of Latinos/as.

These two cities represent the ideal spaces for thinking about Latinos/as identities. With a significant portion of the Latino population being of Mexican Ancestry and with both cities having these groups present prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo the growth of a Mexican American middleclass was inevitable. Yet as I show, the numerical presence of Latinos/as in these two cities doesn't negate the white racism and racial climates of white supremacy. Unfortunately diversity does not equate to desegregation and these two cities are still deeply divided into White space and Brown space (de Oliver 1998, Oberle 2008).

One final clarification about the goals of this portion of the research is that it is not about providing a direct or causal link between racism and identity, rather it is an attempt to illustrate what Bourdieu refers to as a "field" (Bourdieu 1990). For Bourdieu (1990) this field is nebulous, yet equally ubiquitous with regard to its impact on people's subjectivities and identities. My discussion's of these climates is a manifestation of this field. I shift the phrasing to illustrate that unlike fields that are generally static in every sense of this word (I'm thinking of a soccer field), to climates which act on people (I'm thinking hail storm or tornado). Bourdieu (1990) moves away from this heavier handed conceptualization with his concept but he also didn't conceptualize power in the same way as I do in this project. Climate allows for a clear break from some of the constraints of less race critical research yet, disables problematic one-to-one causal conceptualization that often come from some race critical research. I argue that whites

are oppressors, yet the ways in which this oppression manifests is complex, illustrating the climate, to use a musical metaphor, can allow us to hear the tones of oppression without knowing the exact keys for locating it.

Arguably this can be viewed as limited, as we are not directly addressing the causes of racism. However, as many race scholars have correctly yet pessimistically noted the causes of racism all stem from power/material inequality. Silver bullets do not eradicate racism, instead they often further entrench people of color deeper in our spaces of oppression. This means that this projects goals are to highlight how these climates of segregation broadly impact the racial identities of all Latinos by focusing on those that are perceived to have, as the arguably short sighted discourse say, “made it” and “no longer have to worry about racism” or to be specific those who are of middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as.

#### *Choosing and Accessing the Middleclass (Sampling)*

With these methodological considerations about Phoenix and San Antonio as research sites in mind, I moved to deciding how to contact, select, and determine which middleclass Mexican ancestry Latino/as would be ideal for this research. This process required the consideration of several factors, measuring class status, racial identification, and determining generational importance. Namely each of these factors would determine how I recruit Latino/a people into the study as well as which areas of sociological research this project will enter into.

My measures of class status were drawn from other projects that addressed the experiences of Middleclass Latinos/as. Early reports such as Rodriguez (1996) and Bean

et. al. (2001) utilized a combination of education, income, and homeownership. More recent scholarship also utilizes these factors (Macias 2006, Cobas and Feagin 2008, Chavez 2011, Feagin and Cobas forthcoming) and a recent book by Vallejo (2012) utilizes four measures of class status by adding participation in a white-collar profession or business ownership. For my analysis I drew on all four measures mentioned above however, my recruitment letter (Appendix I) for each city only listed the following requirements:

To qualify for this research you must consider yourself to be of Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano/a ancestry and have **at least one** of the following:

- attended college for at least one semester or more
- have a college and/or professional degree
- be currently attending college or professional school
- a household income around or above \$40,000 per year
- parents whose household income is around or above \$40,000
- own your home/have a mortgage on your home

(Delgado recruitment letter 2011)

The requirements for participation in this research were identification as a Latino/a, of Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano/a ancestry and have achieved one of the three thresholds for middle class status. This is a much less strict interpretation of class status than many others have used, namely because class status is much more malleable and shifts quickly in various contexts. For example during one of my ethnographic experiences I was Cesar Chavez day parade talking with a Mexican American Lawyer running for City council in San Antonio and he stated, “Well I was born working class and though I went to [a top ranked law school] I don’t feel like I’m middleclass. In my mind I’m working class even though my education says otherwise” (ethnographic account: 32611). He illustrated to me the complexities of measuring classed experiences.

If we argue as Bourdieu (1984) does, class shapes a myriad of our practices then this Latino experience would place him in an in-between space both working and middleclass.

Gaining access to these individuals came primarily from sending emails to organizations affiliated with Latinos/as. Additionally about 60% of my respondents were accessed through snowball sampling. Because these two cities have extensive college/university systems in each, I began with these organizations. In San Antonio and Phoenix I emailed the social science departments asking for permission to “recruit” in their classrooms (Appendix I). In San Antonio I contacted three universities University of Texas at San Antonio, Our Lady of the Lake University and Saint Mary’s University. In Phoenix I focused all of my energies on Arizona State University as it was a much larger university system than the schools in San Antonio.

In addition to social science departments, I contacted student organizations focusing on Latino/a students. In San Antonio I was able to conduct interviews with several students from a Latino/a student organization for business majors. In Phoenix I had significant contact with many students in a Latino/a professional/graduate student organization. These organizations were useful as many of the students in each were highly motivated and were keenly aware of their movement into in within the middleclass.

However, beyond student organizations I was able to access many individuals through “weak ties” (Granovetter 1973) of my respondents via snowball sampling (Goodman 1961, Morgan 2008). Because avoiding the issues of non-representativeness,

are not the goal in a study that aims to capture understandings and subjective experiences, snowball samples were deemed appropriate (Morse 2004). Morse (2004) notes that snowball sampling is especially useful for populations that are difficult to access or pin down, such as with middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinos/as. Accessing this population is accomplished through their networks as there wasn't a readily available organization or group to locate them that was explicitly middleclass. For example a retiree named Benito was referred to me by Carlos, who knew Benito informally through shared membership in a Latino/a organization (non-university affiliated), Benito in turn referred me to Henry, another retiree. Henry then referred Arturo to me another person who had lived in Phoenix for a considerable amount of time, in fact this entire group/network of individuals was largely elderly men who had been in Phoenix for a considerable amount of time. These types of connections were the case with many of my respondents as I often only needed to access one person and their personal and professional networks did the rest of the recruitment for me.

These respondents all were very happy to provide me with more connections and help in completing my research. Their willingness to help eased the collection of a considerable number of respondents. However, there are potential problems with regard to the levels of representativeness of these respondents. This project is not attempting to accomplish the levels of representativeness aspired by many of the positivistic approaches utilized by sociology (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000). Instead it builds on research that has moved away from grand narratives and aggregate assumptions to provide micro-level, thickly described understandings of the experiences of people of

color. Many CRT scholars (Crenshaw et. al. 1995, Delgado and Stefancic 2001) have argued for taking social science research and data in the direction that centers the voices of people of color. This projects goals are the same, but not for reasons that understand that representativeness of racial identity, racial subjectivity, and racial experiences are best understood through thousands of surveys but instead must be accomplished through thickly described (Geertz 1972) understandings of everyday life. Moreover, because the goals of ethnomethodology are focused on the processes of specific phenomenon (Heritage 1984) this requires a pointed and specific sample and sampling method. The sampling method described above provided access to a group of Latino/a people that are a numerically small population. In the next section I provide demographic contours of this pointed sample.

#### *Demographics of Middleclass Latinos/as in Sample*

After conducting 67 in-depth semi-structured interviews with middleclass Latinos the demographics were uniform. The Latinos/as interviewed for this research were overwhelmingly from the US (only 9 foreign born), with an average age of 35 years, and the majority describing their hair and eye color as brown or black. There are 32 men and 35 women who participated in the research and 94% identified their sexuality as “heterosexual” or “straight.” 80.6% identified as with some form of Christianity, and 70.1% identifying as having an affiliation with the Catholic Church.

As the recruitment letter stated these individuals are required to identify as Latinos/as of Mexican ancestry. This means they all understand their racial self as Latinos of Mexican ancestry in some capacity, however Chapter VI elaborates on how

this racial identity is far more complex than merely marking it as such. But to be clear the research questions in this project are not asking whether or not Latino/a people are identifying as Latino or even as Mexican, but rather its asking when and under what circumstances are these processes of this identification utilized. This means that understanding how they talk about this identity is the primary means for addressing these identities.

All of the respondents identified in some capacity with the recruitment requirements of identifying as Mexican, Mexican American and/or Chicano ancestry. The goals of the research were to analyze and illuminate the ways in which this ancestry was manifest and negotiated for each of these respondents. To accomplish this a series of explicit questions pertaining to racial identification were asked. The entirety of the interview schedule is focused on the racial identities of the respondents however only a some directly asked them about how they talk, narrate, and generally experience their racial identities (See appendices II and III). Other questions were structured in a manner to enable the respondents to talk about experiences or elements in their lives that provide context or examples underscoring the direct questions about identities (See appendices II and III).

Another major component of these respondents' experiences is their class status. Measuring class as mentioned above is accomplished with three axes: education, income, and occupational status. Respondents were required to achieve at least one of these axes. Moreover class status is measured broadly to provide a complex understanding of middleclass Latino/a people. This means that addressing middleclass



status as meeting one or more of the following was often more than adequate for this project. But just to be clear I will elaborate on the demographics of each three measures taken at the time of the interview: education, income, and occupation. Below Table 1 shows three demographic thresholds that determined these Latinos/as ability to participate in this research.

**Table 1.** Latino/a Middleclass Status

Interview <sup>12</sup>	Education <sup>13</sup>	Annual Household Income	Occupation
<b>San Antonio</b>			
Zelda	College (1)	Less than 20k	College Student/Sales
Jaime	Some College	50K or more	Real estate
Flor	College (3)	200k or more	College Student
Carolina	PhD	Less than 20k	Professor
Liliana	College (3)	50K or more	College Student
Veronica	College (4)	20k or more	Secretary/Student
Selena	College (3)	40k or more	College Student
Ricardo	PhD	200k or more	Full Professor
Luis	Bachelors	40k or more	Graphic Artist
Ronnie	College (3)	Less than 20k	Student/Dance Director
Thomas	Associates	50K or more	Electronic Technician
Estella	College (3)	Less than 20k	Mail Carrier/Student
Eduardo	PhD	50K or more	Professor
Ian	College (3)	100k or more	Student/Customer Service
Ramon	Associates	50K or more	Broker/Mortgage Processor

<sup>12</sup> All individuals were given a pseudonym.

<sup>13</sup> Educational status with a number indicates current status of this degree for example “college (1)” indicates freshman status. “Some college” indicates they are no longer in college or pursuing a degree but they attended for a period of time of greater than one semester.

**Table 1. Continued**

Interview	Education	Annual Household Income	Occupation
Frank	Some College	30k or more	Staff Accountant
Jenny	College (3)	30k or more	Community Organizer
Elsa	Bachelors	200k or more	Real Estate Broker
Michael	Some College	40k or more	Contractor
Rebecca	Some College	40k or more	Supervisor
Reynaldo	Some College	40k or more	Truck Driver
Fernando	Some College	0/30k or more	Unemployed/former Bartender
Sara	Some College	20k or more	Accounts payable
Marisa	Bachelors	50K or more	College Student
Antonia	Masters	40k or more	Librarian
Tiffany	Masters	100k or more	Teacher
Jeanette	Bachelors	40k or more	High School Teacher
John	Bachelors	50K or more	High School Teacher
Julian	Some College	30k or more	Sales Representative
Suzanne	Masters	30k or more	Social Worker
Olivia	PhD	75k or more	Professor
<b>Phoenix</b>			
Sandra	ABD	20k or more	Graduate Student
Alejandra	College (4)	Less than 20K	Office Administration
Hilario	College (3)	20k or more	College Student
Mary	Some College	40k or more	Social Work
Julia	Bachelors	Less than 20K	Advertising
Manuel	PhD	20K	Professor
Maria	Bachelors	90k or more	Art Director
Marta	Bachelors	40k or more	Case Manager
Ysenia	Masters	30k or more	Legal Assistant
Michelle	Some College	65k or more	Director of Social Service Organization
Rudy	Bachelors	70K or more	Community Organizer
Carlos	Masters	40k or more	Retired Executive Director
Erin	Graduate (2)	90k or more	Graduate Student
Monica	Graduate (3)	Less than 20K	Graduate Student

**Table 1.** Continued

Interview	Education	Annual Household Income	Occupation
Ana	Bachelors	Less than 20K	Yoga Instructor
Jeane	Graduate (3)	Less than 20K	Graduate Student
Dan	Graduate (2)	20k or more	Graduate Student
Henry	Masters	30k or more	Retired Teacher
William	Bachelors	Less than 20K	Health Administration
Felix	Graduate (2)	30k or more	Graduate Student
Mariel	Graduate (3)	Less than 20K	Graduate Student
Ryan	Graduate (3)	40k or more	Graduate Student
Lorena	J.D.	45k or more	Post-doc
Aaron	J.D.	40k or more	Attorney
Sofia	J.D.	50K or more	University Administration
Javier	Masters	75k or more	Librarian
Julio	PhD	100k or more	Professor
Josue	J.D.	30k or more	Attorney
John	Masters	95k or more	Professor (lecturer)
Lori	Bachelors	Less than 20K	Customer Service
Juanita	Graduate (3)	Less than 20K	Graduate Student
Steven	Masters	100k or more	Director of private organization
Arturo	Bachelors	100k or more	Real Estate Broker
Paul	Graduate (1)	Less than 20K	Graduate Student

According to Table 1 the education threshold of one semester or more was met by all of my respondents. This means that all of these respondents had experienced a white middleclass college setting (1990). Moreover it also indicates that 85% (57) of the sample are either currently attending college or already have achieved at least an associate's degree. Of these 57 respondents 65.6% (44) have at least a bachelors degree.

This means that the vast majority of the sample has experienced the socialization processes of four year white institutions of learning (Moore 2008). Moreover, though its not shown, all of these individuals with at least a bachelor's degree attended predominantly white middleclass institutions.

The second measure of middleclass status of the household income threshold also had a significant portion of the respondents achieving this status. 59.7% of the respondents made more than \$40,000 per year. Indicating that the vast majority of these individuals have an income that places them near or above the median income for Phoenix and San Antonio. Moreover, many of the respondents in this sample were full time college students which means their household incomes were low but often supplemented in some capacity and because I only asked for wages earned many didn't mention student loans or help from family members in their accounts of their household income.

In terms of their occupational status many of the respondents worked in firmly white-collar positions. While their occupations varied, such as Reynaldo from San Antonio who has a white-collar income but as a truck driver is working class, overwhelmingly my respondents were all participants in white-collar positions. Many have done office work and none own their own business a route that many scholars (Valdez 2011, Vallejo 2012) argue is a significant means for accessing the middleclass. I believe this is largely the case because these cities have historically had large Latino/a middleclass populations historically which set early precedents for later waves of Latino/a people to access these spaces (Villa 2000, Montejano 2010).

Finally another consideration impacting how the sample is to be interpreted is the generational status of the majority of the respondents. While problematically and unreflexively relied upon in the Latino/a sociology literature (Grebler et. al. 1970, Shorris 2001, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Rumbaut and Portes 2001, Telles and Ortiz 2008) generation is a variable that is often used as a stand in for explaining the experiences of Latinos living in the United States. Specifically it's a variable used to address the means through which assimilation is possible for a given individual or case. Often questions about generation of respondents provide a dramatic element to analyses as they can show systemic oppression generation after generation (Telles and Ortiz 2008) but more often than not it is assumed to explain why a particular group of Latino/a people are not able to access material resources. This project recorded the respondents' generational status and overwhelmingly 87% of the respondents were of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and beyond. The total percentage of respondents who are 2<sup>nd</sup> plus and 1.5 generation brings the total up to 97%; 65 of the 67 respondents are either US born or were brought here as young children. Because this research is focused on the middleclass it fits well with the literature explaining that much of the immigration occurring in the Mexican ancestry population is need based (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Moreover it is argued that rarely will you see individuals who are middleclass in Mexico permanently immigrate to the US.

Overall these demographics paint the picture of what this sample looks like, who they are, and how they have come to be part of this research. Moreover it allows for an understanding of the context in which their responses should be understood. These

individuals backgrounds as highly educated, 2<sup>nd</sup> plus generation, heterosexual, catholic, Mexican ancestry Latinos/as shapes how their narratives of the self are manifest. It also shapes how their identities are imposed on them, as these demographics significantly impact how race intersects with these elements of their identities. In addition to these demographics impacting their racial identities it also shaped how I conducted my interviews with these individuals. As they were not experiencing white oppression in the same ways other research has shown for poor, immigrant and working class Latinos, instead I had to be aware that their lives were impacted by their close proximity to whites (some were married to whites); a proximity that was enabled by their class backgrounds and racial identifications.

### **Method and Methodology**

#### *Interviewing Latinos/as*

In our “interview society” (Atkinson and Silverman 1997) there are numerous approaches and understandings of the interview. As I mentioned before survey interviewing is the disciplinary standard however, to address issues of identity and subjectivity a bit more depth is required in the process. Moreover, the interview process historically has roots in the colonial realms of anthropology (Clough 1998, White 2001) and with regard to race in the US has placed people of color in perpetually othered positions (Dunbar et. al 2001). Continuing to use the interview process as a means to understand the ways in which people think and act in the world requires that it be coupled with larger contexts, cultural practices and in general greater understandings of how people live their everyday lives (Silverman 2003). With this in mind, this project

uses the interview as one means to capture how Latinos/as in this research think about and understand their racial identities.

While there are critiques of the narrative or discursive turn's approach to race (Curry 2009), the importance of discourse cannot be ignored (Matsuda 1993). Interview data constitutes an important element of the discursive turn that must continue to garner a significant amount of attention. Namely, as many calls from critical race theory and race critical theory continue to require the centering of narratives of people of color (Crenshaw et. al. 1995). This dissertation follows this approach by centering how Latino/a people understand their self. This means the narratives they provide constitute a piece of the puzzle surrounding their racial oppression. Racial identities are imposed on people of color by whites and by white controlled racial hierarchies and power structures however, this project aims to understand how people of color, specifically middleclass Mexican ancestry Latino/as, "deal" with this oppression.

One of the easiest means for understanding how these respondents deal with oppression is to ask them directly. However, asking questions about racial oppression are rarely answered in a direct manner (Adler and Adler 2001, Dunbar et. al 2001), instead it required a significant amount of rapport building. This rapport building required nimbleness on my part during the interview. This means that though I characterized the interviews as semi-structured, i.e. using an interview script or schedule, I nonetheless allowed room for the interview to shift gears toward the conversational. The shifting of gears allowed for the respondents to feel less like they were being interrogated or questioned and more like the interview was a conversation or discussion

about their racial identities. Methodologically speaking this also moves the interview away from the common conceptualization of interviewees as a “vessels-of answers” to be tapped and more toward the recognition of the interview as co-constructed (Gubrium and Holstein 2001) and “living” (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000).

Conceptualizing the interview as “living” (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000) allows for the final product of the interview as well as the instrument used in the interactional moment of the interview, to shift and change as the respondents’ shifted and changed. This means that the interview schedules (see appendices II and III) itself had to shift depending on the context in which it was deployed.

To accomplish this I used two interview schedules/templates (appendices II and III) for understanding the experiences of Latino/a people in both Phoenix and San Antonio. These templates were the same with the small exception for the maps of the cities and the discussions of SB 1070 and The Alamo. The maps were different because I wanted to understand how they experienced segregation in the city they currently lived in, not how they perceived segregation in another city (Berry 2008). I did not ask them how they perceived or thought about the segregation in any other cities. Moreover, the topics of the Alamo and SB 1070 were place specific I elected make them less central in their respective interviews. I did however address each topic in both cities but SB 1070 was more central in Phoenix and The Alamo was more central in the interviews in San Antonio.

Beyond these small differences the interview schedules were the same but each interview required very subtle differences in how the interview was conducted. This



means that as a “living” interview each interviewee took a slightly different approach to the questions and I facilitated this response. This doesn’t mean that I asked respondents completely different questions, only that there is nuance in each interview that was part of the process of building rapport and giving the respondent room to come to their own narrative practice (Holstein and Gubrium 2000).

Despite being co-constructed I nonetheless used the interview schedules to provide a guide for how the interview was to be conducted. This means the content of the interviews was centered on several topics all focused on addressing the three research questions discussed in Chapter I. Typically the interviews focused on nine areas all addressing how these Latinos/as experience racism and processes of racialization in the United States. These areas can broadly be described as: Race/Racial Identity, Gender and Sexuality, Language and History/Ancestry, Citizenship, Middleclass Identity, City Space, Immigration and Immigration Legislation, Cultural Practices, Parental/Familial Relationships (appendices II and III). Each of these areas provides a general understanding of how Latino/a people think about the various elements that impact their racial selves. These topic areas were addressed after I collected general demographics about age, gender, eye/hair color, gender, occupation, income, hometown, siblings(age, number, and gender), children (age, number, and gender), education (up to highest level achieved), years lived in city/southwest, area of the city currently living in, languages spoken, sexual orientation, religion and spouse/partner/significant other (gender and race) (appendices II and III ).

These questions provided the context from which understanding and asking questions on the nine topical areas could be based upon. For example, because I knew that the individual identified as heterosexual I could get a clear understanding of how they perceive GLBTQQA Latino/a people or because they said they were a professor I could ask them to describe their graduate school experience. These early demographics enabled the context on which the interview could become organic and take on a co-constructed form. As I came to know more about the respondent the thicker and more detailed understanding of their racial identities I could inquire about.

This contextualization and topical focus required a significant amount of time as the vast majority of the interviews lasted 2 hours or more with several exceeding 3 hours. Knowing these demographics and asking questions in these topical areas were best illustrated as the interviews shifted from having an initial mechanical/formal feel to a more conversational and informal feel overall. This movement represented a shift from a semi-structured interview toward a conversational interview. This shift is the building and solidification of rapport with the respondents but beyond this it illustrates my ability to access deeper understandings of how their identities are formed, constructed, and negotiated. These individuals provided numerous emotional responses conveying the depth and details of their experiences with racism, racialization, and in general their experiences with white oppression, giving me a direct line to hear their personal understandings of race. Surveys with pre-scripted responses cannot convey how racialization has shaped the assimilation practices of Latinos/as (an example of this

failure is Golash-Boza and Darity 2008), but their own narrative practices directly illustrate how their racial selves are shaped, maintained, and negotiated on a daily basis.

### *Narrative Analysis*

Analyses focused on the racial identities experienced by people of color requires a detailed understanding of their epistemological and ontological subject positions (subjectivities) which, as Riessman (1993) argues is best accomplished through the use of narrative and narrative analysis. Garfinkel sums up the importance of narratives (accounts as he describes them), “Members’ accounts are reflexively and essentially tied for their rational features to the socially organized occasions of their use for they are *features* of the socially organized occasions of their use” (1967:4).

Racial identity narratives are equally tied to their occasions of use, i.e. the interview and other contexts, but importantly this means that the identities that are narrated in the interviews are constituted in these narrations. Holstein and Gubrium (200) also see Gubrium 1997) argue that our selves are constructed in and through the narratives we provide about our self. This means that the narratives we created in these interviews constitute a racial self for middleclass Latinos/as. To be clear the Holstein and Gubrium (2000b) arguments do not advocate for the narratives representing the racial self but rather they constitute the racial self. This means that the self talked about in the interviews represents the construction of identity in the particular space and time of the interview but it is a space and time that is nonetheless linked to other spaces and other times. These interviews constitute the self for many of these Latino/a people that are formed from the social interactions on micro and macro levels (Holstein and

Gubrium 1995, 2000a) and while these identities are presented in the space of the interview, the space of the interview exists in the context of the larger social structures. While my presence and our interactions impacted how their identities were presented, as whites might curtail certain presentations of the self (Dunbar et. al. 2001).

The responses given by Latinos/as in the hundreds of pages of interview transcriptions were vast and covered many topics other than those that I tried to organize the interview around. However to focus their responses I used a two tier coding scheme, wherein I used a broad coding scheme and then a more narrow and focused scheme. This coding is all oriented around garnering a clear understanding of how these Latinos/as understand and experience white oppression and their racial selves.

The broad coding scheme was focused on discussions of race, class, gender, space, and sexuality. Using Qualrus qualitative coding program I was able to locate instances of respondents' use of these themes. Beyond merely searching the transcribed interview I was able to tag their responses as they touched on each of the topics. For example any instance where the respondent talked about race was coded under the race tag. This included more innocuous or indirect conversations about race and racial issues such as statements such as "my brother is biracial" or "I attend an all black church". While important for understanding the respondent's social space and relationships, statements such as these don't provide clear or direct understandings of how they formulate and understand their racial identities but they do remain peripherally important for thinking about identities for Latino/a people.

After coding these broad topics I was able to then move into the more specific discussions that pertained to experiences, identity, and identity negotiation. This meant going through the race tags to focus on how the respondents understood their racial selves. These race tags were then organized around several themes: identity not (wielding of dominant narratives, overt deflection of stereotypes, middleclass mitigation), direct statements of racial identity, skin tone/phenotype, narratives of oppression (in San Antonio, at work, at school, at home), and familial understandings of race (these themes are presented in chapters IV, V, and VI). Many of the narratives overlap with regard to these codes and some touched on several codes I created. Generally speaking these schemes provided a significant amount of data for understanding how Latino/a people experience white oppression and “do identity work” (Storrs 1999, Khanna 2010).

#### *Descriptive Analysis*

Focusing on the description of the content rather than the frequency of the occurrence of specific content, a descriptive analysis (Wolcott 1994, Sandelowski 2000) provides a qualitative mapping of a specific social terrain. In this analysis I provide the description of the discursive terrain of the Alamo website and the press releases of the Maricopa county sheriffs office from 2011. This differs from a discourse analysis or content analysis as it does not provide a “count’ or frequency of the occurrence of specific coded responses (Van Dijk 1993) but is more interpretive of the content in each case. While data saturation is certainly important and accounted for in this project, the goal is much more oriented around providing thickly described understanding of

Latino/a middleclass experiences with white supremacy and their identity. Moreover I choose to use descriptive analysis as it focuses primarily on specific detailed understandings of two cases, rather than having numerous or multiple cases from which to draw information<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, I believe this descriptive response brings this project inline with its ethnographic tone, in particular as I draw inferences about cities from these two cases (Alamo website and MCSO press releases). Sandelowski clarifies,

In qualitative descriptive studies, language is a vehicle of communication, not itself an interpretive structure that must be read. Yet such surface readings should not be considered superficial, or trivial and worthless. I intend the word surface here to convey the depth of penetration into, or the degree of interpretive activity around, reported or observed events (2000).

Descriptive analysis is centered on recognizing interpenetration of texts (Smith 1990) such as the narratives of Latino/a people and the narratives of press releases and a website. Moreover, it is a method that is distinct from other qualitative methods as “language becomes a vehicle not the interpretive structure.” For this project I examined how the language used in the Alamo webpage and in the MCSO press releases impacts the larger space and experiences of middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as. These

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<sup>14</sup> This limited data is only present for the Alamo webpage. The MCSO has press releases dating back to 2007 providing 7 years worth of data and it could be argued that it is more appropriately analyzed by content analysis. However, for reasons of parsimony and continuity I employ a descriptive analysis for both. Moreover, I don't believe that a descriptive analysis detracts from the overall argument I make about MCSO press releases which is that they set a tone of white supremacy and oppression. The language used and the position these press releases take, can be supplemented and supported by a count based content analysis are not necessarily improved by them.

discourse convey white supremacy and oppression and are the vehicle for larger systems of oppression. As Sandelowski notes this does not imply superficiality but rather a different means for addressing the content and importance of language (also see Brekhus, Galliher, and Gubrium 2005).

Similar to my coding of the narrative I used a two-tier approach to organize these data. I broadly used instances that reflected and stood out as directly addressing race or racial histories of the city spaces. This means I broadly pulled out discussions that directly or indirectly addressed the racial histories and contexts of each space. For example regarding the use of race in the Alamo webpage, rarely did it ever mention the race of the people who fought at the Alamo, however, in this retelling of history nationality became a proxy for race as the ‘Texans’ and ‘Mexicans’ fought over land. This stand in for race is clear as the vast majority of the men who died in the Alamo battle fighting for Texas were Anglos (there are only two or three Mexicans who fought for the Texan side) (Flores 2002, Ramos 2008). Because of this “Texan” became coded language for White/Anglo, which enabled specific focus on processes of racialization. Similarly this was also the case for the press releases in phoenix wherein we see that “illegal immigrant” becomes coded language for Mexican/Latino/a immigrant. Again focusing on the use of this coded language enabled a clear understanding of how these two cases racialized Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people (Sandelowski 2000).

Once the broad discussions of race were drawn, I then moved to specific examples for each space. In both San Antonio and Phoenix I was able to focus the discussion on how whiteness was constructed and how this created a whites only racial

climate. In each I focused on how whites and whiteness were juxtaposed to Latinoness in each place. Drawing on themes of white presence and whiteness as normative I identified three coding schemes: whiteness as historically natural, the space as normatively white and whites as virtuous. The second part of the coding was focused on how Latino/as are discussed and specifically on how they were racialized by the content of the webpage and press releases. From this I focused on three codes: Latinos/as as criminals, Latinos/as as enemies of Whites, and the use of colorblind semantic moves (Bonilla-Silva 2006). These codes provide an understanding of how both Latino/a people are conceptualized and how their racial identities are continually juxtaposed and understood through whiteness.

The descriptive analysis provides an understanding of how the discursive climates of both Phoenix and San Antonio are racialized for people of color. These represent “ideal types” (Weber 1949) for thinking about how contexts of racialization work. They provide a general understanding for thinking about how Latino/a people are racialized in the spaces of Phoenix and San Antonio. Though each is focused in the content of the narratives of the space they nonetheless do not detract from the impact of everyday racist language has on all the Latino/a people living in the space (Silverman 2003). This portion of the analysis supplements and underscores the narratives of Latino/a peoples interview narratives and provides the context for understanding how Carmel cities are highly racialized spaces.



## **Conclusion**

Cobas and Feagin being one of the few qualitative studies on Latinas/os focused on the middleclass this chapter follows the methodological approaches of their study (for other research see, Aranda 2007, Agius Vallejo and Lee 2009, Agius Vallejo 2009, Chavez 2011, Agius Vallejo 2012). Demographically respondents in this research, reflect Cobas and Feagin's (2008) research:

Our respondents are mostly Latinos/as considered middle-class, that is, well educated and successful in upper white-collar and business occupations. They include teachers, small business owners, office workers, and government administrators...Most were born in the United States or have resided here for at least a decade (41).

However, unlike Cobas and Feagin (2008) I focused this research on a specific group of Latino/a people, individuals of Mexican ancestry. This is the largest Latino/a group in the US, comprising 63% of all Latinos residing in the US. This means Mexican Ancestry demographic shifts are going to reflect a significant shift for all the aggregate measures of Latino/a people in the US. This is certainly the case for the middleclass, as Agius Vallejo (2012) argues, this group is growing exponentially and the middleclass will be the future of the US as they come to populate significant portions middleclass schools, jobs, and leisure activities. Measuring this experience is the goal of this dissertation.

This chapter provides the method and the methodology for understanding the experiences of middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinos/as. Using the data from interviews,

a website and press releases I highlight how Latino/a people are experiencing the two cities of Phoenix and San Antonio. Moreover I provide the means for addressing the research questions proposed in Chapter I. Namely by using interview data and narrative analysis (Riessman 1993), an important method for research on identity, I provide a clear means for thinking about how Latino/a people understand who they are and how they are perceived. Illuminating an important point about identity, that it's not only how people perceive their self but also how their identities are imposed on them. Narratives of their racial experiences provide this understanding of the self as that which "I think I am" and that which "I'm perceived to be." Borrowing from Holstein and Gubrium's (2000) arguments about a self-constructed in and through narrative, I identify racial selves that are constructed through these interview narratives.

To support and contextualize this interview data I draw on two sources to highlight the racialized everyday experienced by Latinos in these cities. Focusing on the Alamo website and the MCSO 2011 press releases, this data speaks to a larger discourse about race and the white oppression of Latinos/as. It provides a clear narrative that is pervasive in both San Antonio and Phoenix and while these two examples may be ideal types (Weber 1949) they are nonetheless pervasive. All the Latinos/as I interviewed had a clear understanding of these two narratives.

Bringing together these two data sources enable me to address the research questions about how Latinos understand, navigate, and negotiate their racial identities. Moreover each enables a better understanding of how processes of white oppression are intersecting with class, as the statements made in the website and press releases are

about all Latinos/as the middleclass is directly impacted by them. This is telling as it points to the superseding of race when it comes to the middleclass (I address this in chapters 5,6, and 7). Ultimately, this data provides insight into the experiences of the middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinos/as living in two large cities in the Southwest and shows how their experiences are racialized in ways that are both similar to other working class or poor Mexican ancestry Latinos and even to other Latino/a groups yet it also illuminates how their experiences different from these groups as well.

## CHAPTER IV

### CARAMEL CITIES: WHITE CONTROLLED RACIAL CLIMATES IN PHOENIX

### AND SAN ANTONIO

*To speak of 'producing space' sounds bizarre, so great is the sway still held by the idea  
that empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it*

Henri Lefebvre (1974:15)

#### **Introduction**

In the summer of 2009, Dr. Henry Louis Gates one of the few Black professors at Harvard University was arrested on the front steps of his home—charged with disorderly conduct. He had recently arrived back in Cambridge, MA after conducting research in China when one of his neighbors called the police claiming that two large Black men were attempting to break into Dr. Gates' home. Dr. Gates states during an interview with *The Root* an online news source (Olopade 2009), that upon arriving home the lock on his front door was not working and after going in through the back door, he was on the phone with Harvard University officials who perform the maintenance on all the faculty housing and noticed a uniformed officer on his front porch. Dr. Gates went to speak with the officer who insisted that Dr. Gates step onto the front porch—Dr. Gates refused and went to retrieve his identification. The officer followed Dr. Gates into his home and after seeing Dr. Gates' proof of residence at that address and his Harvard University faculty identification card, ignored Dr. Gates' requests for his name and badge number. Dr. Gates followed the officer to his front porch, only to be greeted by “an ocean of police officers” who thanked him for his compliance but still arrested him.

Dr. Gates is arguably upper class and his social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) places him among the nations elite scholars and political movers and shakers (President Barack Obama considers him a close friend). However, in this moment Dr. Gates lost all of this status, he was only one thing to this police officer a Black man (Feagin and Sikes 1994). In particular Dr. Gates was a Black man who was, to paraphrase how Dr. Lawrence Bobo (The Root 7/21/09) described it, not showing proper deference to a White police officer. Dr. Gates illustrates the way in which race is all too salient for the people of color who enter the middleclass. Example such as this are common in research on middle and upper class people of color (Feagin and Sikes 1995, Lacy 2007) however, what is most interesting is that these experiences with white racism are also about cities and the racial climates created in these cities. Cambridge is a very white city space, comprised largely of the very white Harvard University community and spaces such as these are often very hostile to people of color. Blacks and Latinos are often mistaken for lurking criminals (this was the case for Dr. Gates'), maintenance workers, or just generally thought to not live in the space.

During one of my interviews, my respondent Ysenia told me about a friend who was a Latino lawyer and like Dr. Gates experienced significant racism in his own front yard. For her friend, a lawyer, the space that he lived in dictated his racial self. Living in a predominantly white neighborhood he was racialized as other before he was viewed as a lawyer. In this instance he was not like the white investment bankers, professors, or corporate executives living in this middleclass neighborhood, he experienced the conflation of class and race that arises out of white conceptualizations of who Latinas/os

are supposed to be. This means that this lawyer experienced racialization that stripped him of his middle class status he became a brown Mexican, who was working class with every new interaction he had with his white neighbors. I'm arguing that despite middleclass status these Latinos/as are not able to escape the racist contexts of these city spaces. This chapter elaborates on what these racial contexts look like for Latinos/as living in Phoenix and San Antonio.

In this chapter I provide an understanding of the racial context that Latinas/os must negotiate in the spaces of San Antonio and Phoenix. I must note that the discussion in this chapter is not intended to be an in-depth conceptualization of two cities. Instead it provides insight into the ever-present racist contexts woven into the social fabric of both San Antonio and Phoenix. It should be understood as an illustration of the normatively of white supremacy in two cities with very large Latino/a populations.

Latinas/os living in these cities represent a significant portion of the populations 63% in San Antonio and 40% in Phoenix (Ennis et. al 2010). They work in almost every industry and are represented in almost all positions of government (even the mayor of San Antonio is Mexican American) yet, while these cities can easily be characterized as caramel cities (especially San Antonio), the discursive, social, and cultural climates of the spaces rarely reflect the presence of this population or if they do it is reflected in a problematically racist manner. Moreover these cities are highly segregated (Jones 2003, 2006, Thomas 2010), with the majority of the Latino/a populations relegated to lower income areas. In San Antonio we see the Central, South, West and Northwest sides of the cities are predominantly Latino/a. In Phoenix the Central, South and, Western

portions of the city contain large pockets of Latinos. To understand this segregation as it is experienced by the Latinos/as in this research I draw on cognitive maps (Berry 2008) created by my respondents. These maps show that many of the Latinas/os were acutely aware of the racial organization of the city spaces, as they noted over and over the same racial enclaves throughout the city. Their hyper awareness of the city space and of the ways in which this space is racialized is directly related to a larger racial climate in the city spaces. This chapter examines how Mexican Americans mapped the cities they live in, and illustrates how this mapping is directly related to the larger racist narratives present in the cities.

To further address this racial climates I examine two discourse that were pervasive in each city—for Phoenix I look at Sheriff Joe Arpaio’s press releases for 2011 and for San Antonio I examine the Alamo’s historical timeline as it is accounted for on the official Alamo webpage. This is not meant to be a comparison of the discourse it is only meant to illustrate the racist climates present in each. I argue that each of these narratives set a tone for the city space wherein Latinas/os are conceptualized as the constant invader and perpetual other while whites are virtuous (Feagin 2010) heroes and protectors of these cities. Understanding this is crucial as it illustrates how, though San Antonio and Phoenix have significant Latino/a populations, the racial climates of each indicate otherwise. This leaves little room for, as I will discuss in Chapters V and VI, how Latino/a people negotiate their racial selves. Living in these racist climates directly impacts how they negotiate and deploy their Latino/a identities.

I conclude this chapter with a connection between how Latinas/os conceptualize the city itself and how the racist discourse shape this experience. The mappings provided by the Mexican Americans in this research convey an understanding of race and a racial hierarchy, and the focus on a larger discourse illustrate how these spaces are ultimately organized around these processes of racialization.

### **Cognitive Mappings**

During my interviews I asked 53 (20 in San Antonio and 33 in Phoenix) respondents to provide me with a cognitive map addressing how they interpret and experience the racial segregation of the city space. I specifically asked them two primer questions in succession, “Does San Antonio/Phoenix have a racial organization? For example, Is there a specific side of the city that is white, black, Asian or Latino?” (see appendices II and III). All of my respondents who provided a positive response to this question, I then immediately asked them to draw what this looked like on the maps of the their respective cities (See Appendix IV for examples of the blank maps given to the respondents)

These results of the respondent’s maps clearly illustrate that they understood the city space as segregated. But beyond this it illustrates that for many of the Mexican American residents living in these cities their understandings of the space impact how and where they see their self fitting in the social, cultural, and everyday climate of the cities. Many respondents drew the racial boundaries of the space in such a way that their interpretations mirror the census data (SegMaps 1990). This means that these spaces



worked as a sounding board for many of my respondents to understand the racial hierarchy of their city.

I will briefly summarize how my respondents drew each city space. My intent here is not to provide the explicit details of how each of my respondents experience or understand the space but rather to illustrate that in general their interpretations show that Phoenix and San Antonio are segregated spaces. Their interpretations provide a narrative of these cities as it is understood by these middle class Mexican Americans, and not necessarily one had by all the Latino/as living in the two cities.

#### *San Antonio Cognitive Mappings*

In their drawings of the racial boundaries of San Antonio, there is a clear demarcation of a black, Non-Hispanic white, and Latino/a side of town. 2010 Census data shows the city as 26.6% Non-Hispanic White, 63.3% Hispanic or Latino/a and 6.9% Black (US Census 2013). This means that the city is overwhelmingly Latino/a and as such should be understood as a Caramel city. My respondents however do not experience the space in this manner. In fact they all understand the city to be segregated with Latino/a people living in the South, West, and Northwest corridors of the city and with whites living largely in the North, North central, and Northeastern corridors<sup>15</sup>.

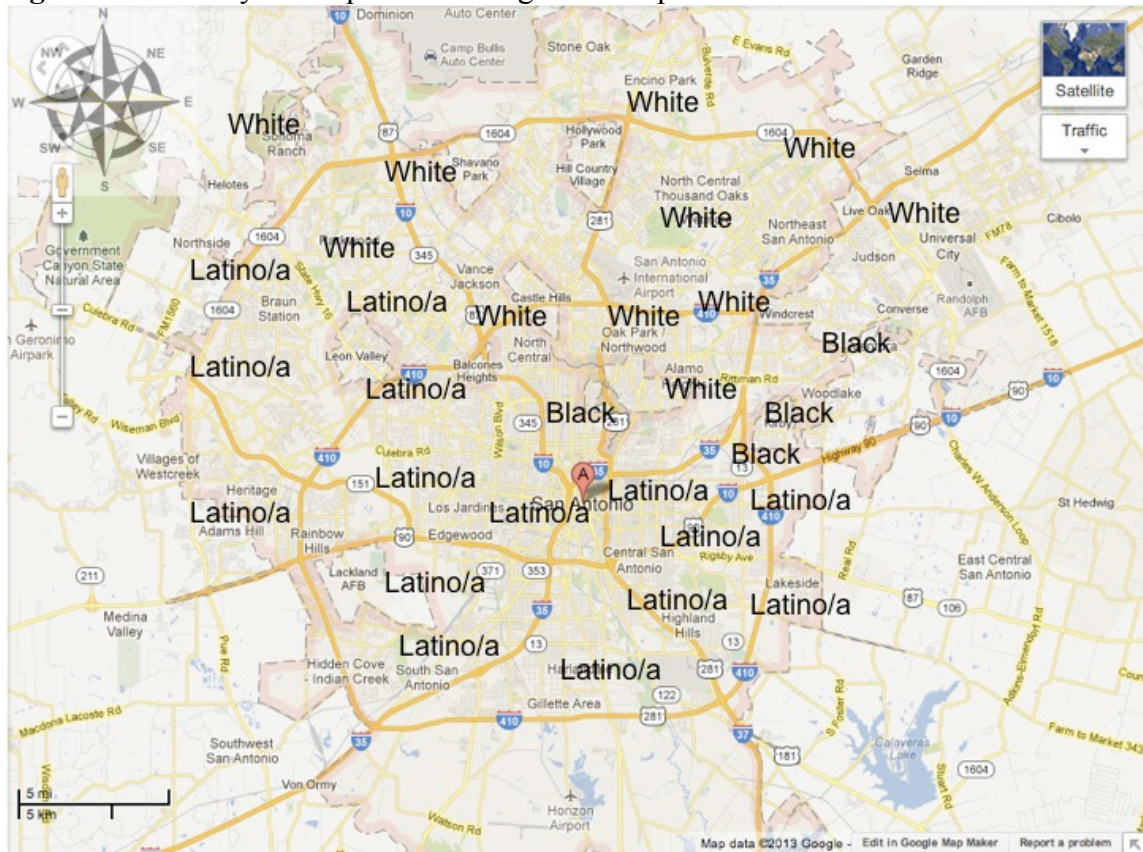
Figure 1. provides a general summary of how the respondents interpreted the city. Because these maps were hand drawn on blank city maps (see Appendix IV) , I created Figure 1. based on a general summary of the respondent's drawings. It is not

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<sup>15</sup> This city has small Black and Asian populations and only a few respondents noted this.

meant to represent the specifics of their responses but rather act as an ideal type, narrative, or vignette used to understand a common pattern in my data.

**Figure 1.** Summary of Respondents' Cognitive Maps in San Antonio



Google Maps - ©2013 Google

My respondents all recognized the segregation and the racial climates that pervade the city space. The manner in which they all mapped the city illustrates their realization that the cities have racial narratives that are commonly shared among my respondents. Responses such as when I asked Julian a sales representative, “What about the eastside? What racial groups live there?” He says “The eastside? Oh its all Blacks who live there,” indicate that the narratives of the city are clear to my respondents.

Others, such as John a high school teacher, drew in his map less rigid boundaries between Latino/as and Whites in the north side indicating that much of the Northwest and North central are racially integrated.

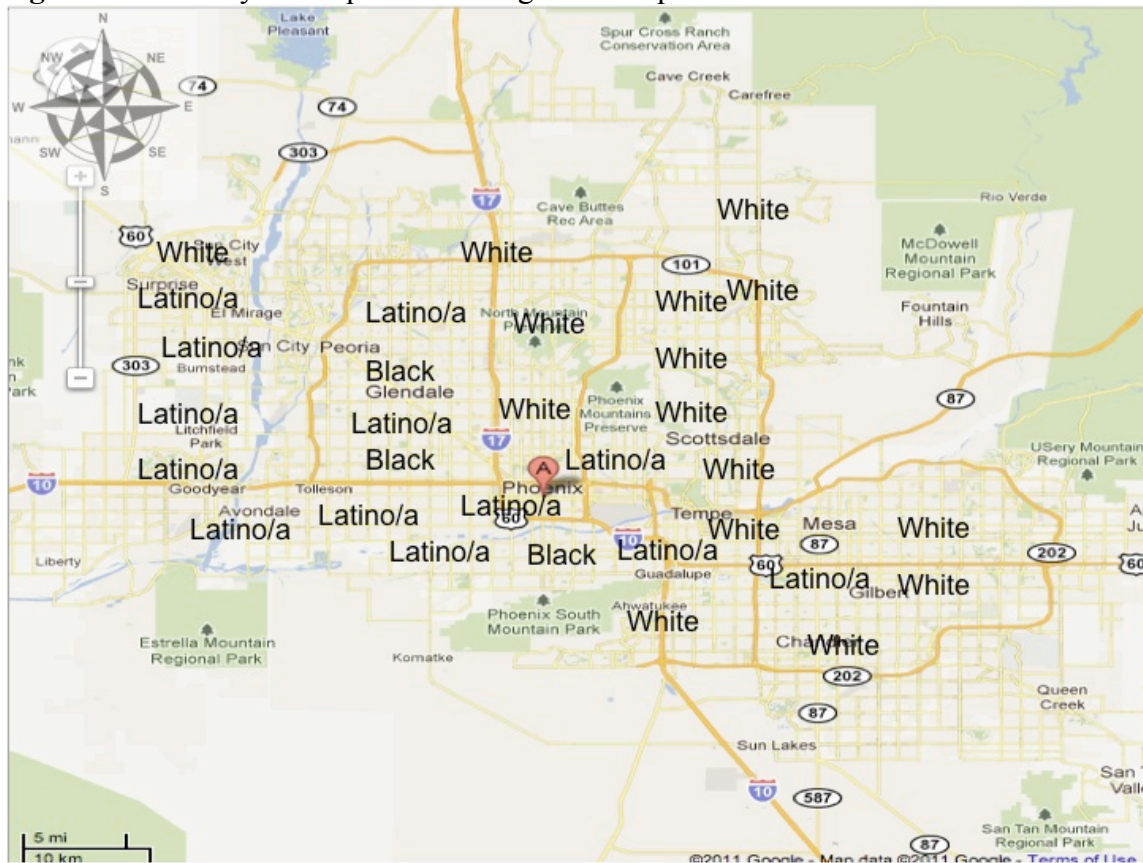
These maps represent the respondent's recognition of the racial hierarchies in their daily lives. My respondent's interpretations of the city illustrate exactly how the cities reflect the racial hierarchy. The spaces that are marked off as predominantly white in San Antonio contain the vast majority of the middleclass resources such as high quality public and private schools, larger concentrations of higher paying jobs, and the parts of the city with the highest home values. It's not a mistake that we see the Latino population moving farther and farther north and east (SegMaps 1990) as they historically only occupied the West and South parts of the central city. In fact, 62 % (20 of 32) my respondents lived in the Northwest suburbs, a largely Latino/a suburban space. Their realization of a racial hierarchy and a racial narrative is pervasive in the city and I'll show in Chapter V that many respondents must navigate whiteness to access white coded middleclass resources.

### *Phoenix Cognitive Mappings*

Phoenix is similar regarding where Latino/a people are living. Phoenix is a space with clear demarcations between White and Latino with a small black population being represented in a few respondents' cognitive mappings. In a city that is 40.8% Latino, 46.5% non-Hispanic Whites and 6.5% Black the racial hierarchy and organization was very clear (2010 US Census) . The southern and western portions of the Phoenix Metro area ( Phoenix and its surrounding cities see Figure 2. and Appendix IV) were largely

Latino/a with a small smattering of a Black population. The north and eastern portions of the metro area were interpreted as predominantly white with a small mixture of some Latinos in the Guadalupe neighborhood.

**Figure 2.** Summary of Respondents' Cognitive Maps in Phoenix



Google Maps - ©2011 Google

Generally speaking, the respondents overwhelmingly illustrated their understanding of how the city spaces were segregated. They indicated that there was a clear racial hierarchy with many explicitly stating that the predominantly white areas tended to have the highest home prices, best schools and the highest income brackets.

While many of the Latino/a and Black neighborhoods were described as poor or working class.

My argument here is not that these responses indicate an objective reality but rather illustrate an all important subjective interpretation of the racialization of a city space—it reflects how the racial climate of Phoenix is understood and consequently impacts the Middleclass Mexican Americans that live there. Overwhelmingly the respondents drew city maps where the largely working class, lower middleclass, and poor neighborhoods tend to be understood as Latino/a. Like the respondents from San Antonio the Phoenix respondents understood that navigating whiteness was crucial to gaining access to white coded resources. 80% (28 of 35) of my respondents lived in the areas indicated as white spaces. Many had gained access to the white resources of these spaces. However, as the discussion of Dr. Gates and Ysenia's lawyer friend at the beginning of this chapter shows, this access doesn't mean they were free from experiencing processes of racialization. In fact many of the respondents in this research indicated, and as I will show later in this chapter, that the Phoenix metro area was a contentious space when it came to race.

The cognitive maps provided by middle class Mexican Americans illustrate how the cities of San Antonio and Phoenix are experienced as spaces organized by race. The disproportionate locating of Latino/a and black neighborhoods in low income and working class neighborhoods indicated to many respondents, at least abstractly, that there was racial inequality. However some respondents didn't make the direct connection to the segregation and their own everyday experiences with racialization.

Barring any analogies to fish and water, I argue that this is largely because these processes of racialization have become second nature to many Latino/a people. Moreover they are often obscured or presented in a manner that many of them are unable to immediately recognize as racist. To shed light on how this process of racialization is manifest in these two cities, I move away from my respondents' narratives and highlight a broader discourse to supplement their understandings of racialization. I provide a discussion of how each space has dominant narratives that racialize Latino/a (and black) people in very specific ways while maintain understandings of these spaces as historically or naturally white.

### **San Antonio: Reign of the Alamo**

The presence of the Alamo in San Antonio has long been discussed and written about in the disciplines of history, sociology, education, political science and many other disciplines, there are even numerous films recounting the story. Often much of the academic discussion focuses on how the historical record of the Alamo should/did look (Aldama and Quinonez 2002, Flores 2002). Many scholars have argued that many Tejanos' fought along side the White men at the Alamo defending, a recently acquired Alamo, from its rightful owners the Mexican Army. These discussions sometimes attempt to include Latino/a people in this historical narrative, however it is often with much chagrin and apprehension on part of the whites who control the narratives of the Alamo<sup>16</sup>. Sanctioned narratives, that is narratives produced by the Daughters of the

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<sup>16</sup> The Daughters of the Republic of Texas have long fought to maintain control over the grounds of the Alamo and consequently have been able to control the way in which the historical record reflects the

Republic of Texas (DRT), instill understandings of the Alamo as a shrine for white history and as the fountainhead for the ideologies of manifest destiny. While this is a very important discussion my focus is not about a dispute about how the historical record should look or how Mexican Ancestry Latinos should be incorporated into the discussion. Rather I am looking at how the Alamo as a historical icon for San Antonio shapes its present racial climate. This means that rather than dispute the way in which the historical timeline or narrative is presented I examine what this time line means for the present (Foucault 1977).

In his discussion of Michel Foucault's concept of the history of the present, Michael S. Roth, argues that basic to Foucault's epistemological inquiry was the understanding of how "history serves the concerns of the present" (1981:42). Historical accounts largely serve to underscore knowledges located in the present. Understanding the history of the Alamo should equally be conceptualized in this manner, namely as the historical account of the Alamo serves to underscore the aforementioned racial climate and segregation of San Antonio. Richard Flores argues, "The making of the Alamo during the Texas Modern uncouples its significance from the narrow confines of the past so that historical lessons and figures from the events of 1836 are recast to serve the ideological and social needs of the twentieth century" (2002:11). The Alamo cannot be (re)presented as objective historical fact, its existence undergirds the present racial hierarchy of San Antonio, Texas.

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space. The DRT is an all white organization requiring proof of lineage for membership (see [www.drinfo.org](http://www.drinfo.org) for more information)

The historical record presented by the curatorial staff of the Alamo on its webpage is the first experience many people have with the Alamo. Many white Americans and white Texans experience the Alamo virtually before they experience it in person. The webpage itself is also one (re) presentation of the larger narratives present in the space itself, with a visit to the Alamo one only gets a more detailed and tactile experience bounded by the same epistemological and ontological framings. These narratives are centered on depicting whites as “virtuous” (Feagin 2011) defenders of freedom and liberty while simultaneously cementing white supremacist conceptualizations about how the Alamo and the city of San Antonio should be narrated. From these narratives I draw out three themes underscoring the Alamo as a textual icon for white supremacy—Naturalizing Whiteness at the Alamo and in San Antonio, symbol for white virtuousness and bravery, and Latino/as as enemies of whiteness. Each narrative strain highlights that San Antonio should be understood as a white city space and that Latino/a people are problematic in their occupation of the space. Moreover it illustrates a racial climate that overwhelmingly writes Mexican Ancestry people out of the historical narrative and subsequently out of the present understanding of the space. When it does include Mexican Ancestry people in the narrative, they are either supporters of white virtuousness or enemies of white virtuousness. Never are Mexican Ancestry Latinos understood as founders of liberty and freedom.

*A History for the Present: Naturalizing Whiteness*

The Naturalizing whiteness theme serves to solidify whites and whiteness as a normative, natural and everyday part of the Alamo and ultimately the San Antonio



landscape. This theme illustrates how the historical accounts presented by the curators of the Alamo naturalize white presence at the Alamo, rather than explicitly highlighting the primary means through which these largely white men, physically took the Alamo from the Mexican government. In fact the historical account on the Alamo Webpage contains an almost complete elision of the process through which the white colonists acquire the Alamo prior to the (in) famous battle of the Alamo. The historical narrative from the webpage states the following regarding the Spanish and Mexican occupation of the Alamo:

Originally named Misión San Antonio de Valero, the Alamo served as home to missionaries and their Indian converts for nearly seventy years. Construction began on the present site in 1724. In 1793, Spanish officials secularized San Antonio's five missions and distributed their lands to the remaining Indian residents. These men and women continued to farm the fields, once the mission's but now their own, and participated in the growing community of San Antonio.

In the early 1800s, the Spanish military stationed a cavalry unit at the former mission. The soldiers referred to the old mission as the Alamo (the Spanish word for "cottonwood") in honor of their hometown Alamo de Parras, Coahuila. The post's commander established the first recorded hospital in Texas in the Long Barrack. The Alamo was home to both Revolutionaries and Royalists during Mexico's ten-year struggle for

independence. The military — Spanish, Rebel, and then Mexican — continued to occupy the Alamo until the Texas Revolution.

San Antonio and the Alamo played a critical role in the Texas Revolution. In December 1835, Ben Milam led Texian and Tejano volunteers against Mexican troops quartered in the city. After five days of house-to-house fighting, they forced General Martín Perfecto de Cós and his soldiers to surrender. The victorious volunteers then occupied the Alamo — already fortified prior to the battle by Cós' men — and strengthened its defenses (<http://www.thealamo.org/battle/battle.php>).

Here we see the historical narrative accounts for over 100 years of creation and occupation of the Alamo by Spanish and Mexican forces in two paragraphs. In a document that is supposed to cover 100 years of history in 5 paragraphs only 2/5 of this discussion is dedicated to Mexican and Spanish occupation, which constitute the majority of the Alamo's occupation during this time period. This means that the time period where white Americans occupied the Alamo, approximately, three months, is the primary focal point in the narrative. Centering white presence of only three months in this narrative locates white occupation of the Alamo as the most important occupation. While the Spanish and Mexican occupations come to be seen as temporally locked in time and having a minimal impact on the interpretation of the icon itself—instead the Alamo should be regarded as a white sanctuary from invading, oppressive hoards of Mexican troops.

The narrative illustrates a space that, without any real justification, is taken over by the Whites and “Tejanos” in a “five day house to house fight.” This telling of the struggle between Mexican and American, fails to account for the fact that these Whites and few Tejanos were invading an existing nation-state. They forcibly took over a military base and killed all the Mexican soldiers maintaining that military base. Based on the DRT’s own retelling it seems that the predominantly white Americans were actually invading another country.

To be clear I am not disputing the historical account as it is portrayed by the DRT and curators of the Alamo. The goal is to illustrate that this recounting of the historical record leaves out significant data for understanding how or why these individuals overtake a Mexican military base. Feagin (2010:17) describes this process as “collective forgetting,” wherein powerful whites choose which historical narratives to include and exclude. In the case of the Alamo webpage we see that the historical narrative is purposefully thin regarding how the capture of the Alamo is to be understood. More detail would reveal a newly formed nation-state of Mexico being invaded by violent, murderous criminals (Acuna 2003, Flores 2002).

Moreover this process of elision is premised on the assumption by both the writer and the reader, that the White insurgents (Acuna 2003) had a moral, social, and culturally acceptable reason for invading the land of another country. That moral, social and cultural imperative is freedom and nationalism by way of manifest destiny. Under these discourse the invasion of the nation-state of Mexico is merely due course and a natural progression of manifest destiny. Through “collective forgetting” (Feagin 2010)

this webpage organizes the historical narrative to maintain the Alamo and consequently San Antonio as a historically white space to both justify and normalize its segregation in the present. Ultimately it obscures the reality of violent whites overtaking a space that was predominantly Indigenous, Mexican Ancestry, African Ancestry, and Spanish Ancestry.

*A History for the Present: White Virtuousness*

The naturalization discourse is also coupled with a narrative that in the process of taking over this space these whites were also virtuous and just in their actions. The second theme is a narrative focused on the maintenance of a historical account of these white defenders of the Alamo as virtuous and brave defenders of freedom. The closing statements of this historical account on the Alamo webpage highlights this point explicitly:

While the facts surrounding the siege of the Alamo continue to be debated, there is no doubt about what the battle has come to symbolize. People worldwide continue to remember the Alamo as a heroic struggle against impossible odds — a place where men made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. For this reason, the Alamo remains hallowed ground and the Shrine of Texas Liberty (<http://www.thealamo.org/battle/battle.php>).

Implicit in these statements is that white<sup>17</sup> men are heroic and just in their actions. Moreover, the faces and names signaling the iconography of the Alamo are

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<sup>17</sup> If we look back to the previous statements in this historical account, we see that there is a consideration of “Texians”<sup>17</sup> and “Tejanos”<sup>17</sup> as part of the groups who defended the Alamo. However, historical

white: Colonel Travis drew a line on the ground and asked any man willing to stay and fight to step over... Among the Alamo's garrison were Jim Bowie, renowned knife fighter, and David Crockett, famed frontiersman and former congressman from Tennessee (Feb. 2012:<http://www.thealamo.org/battle/battle.php>).

In the context of a narrative about the natural presence of whites in the Alamo the story told is that whites are the brave heroes of the Alamo and the Mexican people are the tyrants and sources of oppression. As was previously mentioned Feagin (2010) notes, that white historical narratives often involve “collective forgetting and mythmaking” that center whites as virtuous and people of color as venal.” This underscores my argument of a theme about whites and whiteness as the virtuous protagonists in the historical account of the Alamo. Feagin writes, “When such a momentous and bloody past is suppressed, downplayed or mythologized by elites and historians, ordinary Americans, especially whites understandably have difficulty in seeing or assessing accurately the present-day realities of unjust enrichment and impoverishment along racial lines” (2010:18). Feagin argues that the mythologizing of history has very real consequences for people of color. The segregation of the city of San Antonio results directly from these historical narratives, as they create an understanding of the Alamo and the city space as naturally owned and occupied by whites. And that the whites presently living in the city are descendents (even if not directly or at all) from these virtuous whites,

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accounts of their presence show that overwhelmingly the people who seized the Alamo and fought against the Mexican nation-state were white (Griswald del Castillo 1987, Flores 2002).

therefore following this white supremacist logic they are rightfully in possession of the best resources the city has to offer.

*A History for the Present: Latino/as as Enemies*

To address the third theme of Latino/as as enemy of white freedom and white virtuousness and clarify how the city itself is inculcated in these historical narratives I again turn to the Alamo webpage. The overall idea behind the narrative of the Alamo is that it was a battle fought against an enemy—Mexican people. This enemy was trying to strip the brave and virtuous whites of “their” god given right to land (all of the Northern portion of Mexico, colloquially known as the American Southwest) and freedom. While it is somewhat unclear how the nation-state of Mexico was oppressing these individuals based on the historical narrative given by the website, it is clear that the Mexican Army was the source of this oppression. Because these white men invaded and wrestled control of one of Mexico’s military bases through force, the Mexican military was then required to respond. The Alamo website describes this response or the “Battle of the Alamo,” as follows:

On February 23, 1836, the arrival of General Antonio López de Santa

Anna's army outside San Antonio nearly caught them by surprise.

Undaunted, the Texians and Tejanos prepared to defend the Alamo

together. The defenders held out for 13 days against Santa Anna's army.

William B. Travis, the commander of the Alamo sent forth couriers

carrying pleas for help to communities in Texas. On the eighth day of the

siege, a band of 32 volunteers from Gonzales arrived, bringing the

number of defenders to nearly two hundred. Legend holds that with the possibility of additional help fading, Colonel Travis drew a line on the ground and asked any man willing to stay and fight to step over — all except one did. As the defenders saw it, the Alamo was the key to the defense of Texas, and they were ready to give their lives rather than surrender their position to General Santa Anna. Among the Alamo's garrison were Jim Bowie, renowned knife fighter, and David Crockett, famed frontiersman and former congressman from Tennessee.

The final assault came before daybreak on the morning of March 6, 1836, as columns of Mexican soldiers emerged from the predawn darkness and headed for the Alamo's walls. Cannon and small arms fire from inside the Alamo beat back several attacks. Regrouping, the Mexicans scaled the walls and rushed into the compound. Once inside, they turned a captured cannon on the Long Barrack and church, blasting open the barricaded doors. The desperate struggle continued until the defenders were overwhelmed. By sunrise, the battle had ended and Santa Anna entered the Alamo compound to survey the scene of his victory

(<http://www.thealamo.org/battle/battle.php>).

Amidst the explicit statements of bravery and virtuousness of the white invaders, we see that the Mexican army is described as sneaky, “nearly surprising” the “defenders of the Alamo.” Characterizations of Mexicans as sneaky are prolific in our present media and discourse. This historical account of an army defending its nation from invasion is

clearly aimed at highlighting the Mexican army as less than brave and virtuous. In fact we see that they are considered to be the opposite, that which is to be defeated, and/or the enemy.

In an interesting discursive move (Van Dijk 1993) the author(s) of this historical account make it such that the men occupying the Alamo in 1836, actually are the defenders with the Mexican soldiers and Santa Anna becoming the invaders of white space. Though clearly the space was part of the Mexican nation-state and the Mexican army and its general were merely defending the space they wrestled from the hands of imperial Spain. Instead of seeing a nation-state in its early formation, we see an old narrative of a Mexican invasion of white space (Santa Ana 2003, Chavez 2008). Much like the narratives present in mainstream there is a retelling of a 177-year-old battle that depicts a Mexican ancestry Latinos/as as invading and stealing from virtuous whites.

This historical account in the broad sense draws and reinscribes the racist stereotypes present in today's discourse on Latino/as. By locating the space as white, depicting whites as virtuous and presenting Latino/as as enemies to this virtuousness we see a creation and maintenance of a history that is fundamentally about maintaining white supremacy. But, to be clear, the narratives of Mexican's as invaders didn't originate in 1836, rather we see this is a stereotype that has evolved over time and the presentation of this narrative of the Alamo represents a Foucauldian "history of the present"; the history is written to justify the present power/knowledge relations. To maintain segregation in a city that is predominantly Latina/o all the people living there must come to understand the history of the space with this as at its foundation. Whites



then can say that the racism and segregation are ‘the way it’s always been.’ San Antonio, a city defined and nick-named after the Alamo and all its iconography, must have a clear narrative about what that identity means: San Antonio is a city maintained by virtuous whites who defend(ed) it against invading Mexicans. The racial climate of San Antonio is one that clearly is hostile to Mexican ancestry Latinos, as the foundation to its historical narrative draws on present understandings of Latinas/os as invader and enemy of the white U.S. nation-state.

### **Phoenix: Reign of Sheriff Joe Arpaio**

Phoenix is a large metro area, in the middle of the Sonoran desert. In this desert space it houses 4 million people and has a very large Latino/a population. The city looks like many other cities in the Southwest with significant urban sprawl, multiple urban nodes rather than a clear central space, and seemingly endless suburbs (Gottdiener 1994). It is the multinucleated city Gottdiener (1994) claimed it would become, with many neighborhoods and burrows surrounding springing up around the formerly centralized space. Moreover the formation of this multinucleated space was possible through the introduction of highway systems and the building of a new International Airport that is the hub for many airlines. These factors however, broke apart and divided the once vibrant Mexican American community in South Phoenix. As was the case in Los Angeles (Avila 2004) and San Antonio the re-routing of Interstate Highway 10 divided the Mexican American Community creating a physical barrier of the neighborhood bounded by east Thomas road in the north and by the Salt River in the South (see Appendix IV).

This fractured the Latino/a community and coupled with the suburbanization in many Sunbelt cities (Gottdiener 1994) spread the historically centralized Mexican American community across the metro area or as it is termed by the residents “the Valley.” As my respondents maps show this resulted in a different breakdown in the segregation present in the space. Yet, attributing this division and fracture to a political economy doesn’t provide the entirety of how the segregation is experienced by Mexican Americans living in the space.

Like San Antonio, there is a cultural logic in the racial climate of Phoenix. Stemming from the SB 1070 legislation<sup>18</sup> we see there is a clear division among the Latino/a population and the White population. This division is clearest in the discourse coming from Sheriff Joe Arpaio’s office. Sheriff Joe’s office has focused a significant portion of its attention to creating a climate in the city of Phoenix where brutal discourse is accompanied with brutal raids on Latino/a communities in an effort to intimidate, apprehend, and generally oppress Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people.

As with all culture, rarely is there a definitive origin for this racial climate as it can be attributed to the passage of the SB 1070 legislation but also a history of oppression of Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people in Phoenix, Arizona (Oberle and Arreola 2008) and in the southwest in general (Montejano 1984, Acuna 2003, Gomez 2007). I use the Sheriff’s office to illustrate a significant discourse present in the city of Phoenix today. Like the Alamo, Sheriff Joe’s discursive (and physical) presence invokes

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<sup>18</sup> SB 1070 is the controversial law that was passed to curtail and police the space of Arizona for immigrant activity. Essentially the law criminalizes immigrants and enables law enforcement the opportunity to terrorize Latino/a communities (Saenz, Menjivar, and Garcia 2013)

a language of white supremacy. To highlight the manifestations of this white supremacist language I use 95 press releases<sup>19</sup> sent out by the Maricopa county sheriffs office during 2011.

This office is at the center of the enforcement of the controversial SB1070 law that was passed by Arizona (Saenz, Menjivar, Garcia 2013). In the press releases by this organization I discovered their use of the following themes that create a hostile climate for all Latinas/os living in Maricopa County: colorblind surveillance, criminalization of Latinas/os, and the maintenance of Maricopa county as a white space. Each theme establishes the discursive climate in Phoenix as white and equally creates a climate that facilitates a Latino/a racial identity as foreign, criminal, and generally as racial other.

#### *Colorblind Surveillance*

Colorblind Surveillance should be thought of as one tactic utilized by Arpaio's office and specially as a discursive tactic that shields the office's actions from larger criticisms of racism and racial profiling of Latinos. Colorblind surveillance discourse allows for the policing of Latino/a people that is not about race but rather was as Arpaio describes it is, "merely an issue of enforcing the law" (Sheriff Joe Arpaio press releases 2011). However this mere enforcement of the law is disproportionately aimed at Latino/a people and the Latino/a community. Also these press releases were overwhelmingly focused on the presentation of the Sheriffs office as actively arresting what they characterized as "illegal immigrants" (Sheriff Joe Arpaio Press Releases 2011). In these

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<sup>19</sup> See mcso.org for all the press releases used. Also the sheriff's office has 5 years worth of press releases which will provide an additional 400 plus sources for a forthcoming article explicating these themes further.

press releases 63 focused directly capturing, arresting, imprisoning and deporting undocumented immigrants while 14 indirectly addressed immigration, the policing of the border, and the general ability of the Sheriff's office to exert control the area of Maricopa county. Of these 77 (or 88%) press releases focused on arresting immigrants, none directly stated the race of any individuals as being of Mexican ancestry.

As scholars of color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006) and back stage racism (Houts Picca and Feagin 2007) have noted, whites will rarely express racist thought in an overt way in the front stage. Instead as Bonilla-Silva (2006) notes they often utilize discursive moves to mask their racism. The Sheriffs office's press releases illustrate these discursive moves as they use colorblind language to sidestep their heavy focus on policing, surveilling, and generally terrorizing the Mexican Ancestry community.

Focusing on these practices I found numerous examples of the Sheriff's office using colorblind discursive moves to deflect their participation in raids, surveillance and racial profiling the Latino/a community. In fact during 2011 the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) had an ongoing investigation of the Sheriffs office for such practices. And often this discourse was the Sheriff's office attempt to address, deflect, or mitigate the charges by the DOJ.

Broadly speaking however, this discourse represents the sheriff's office attempt to mitigate and normalize their participation in racial profiling, disproportionate arrests, and surveillance of the Latino/a community. A press release titled "68 Illegal Aliens Nabbed By Sheriffs Deputies In Two Day Long Crime Suppression Operation: U.S. Citizen Arrested Last Night on Smuggling" from January 31, 2011 illustrates a common

approach. Based on the title there is an immediate distinction made about who constitutes a citizen and who doesn't—"U.S. Citizens" and "Illegal Aliens." This is important because the press release eventually locates this citizen as "Caucasian" or white. This practice has two consequences; it locates Latino/as as non-citizens and locates whites as normative citizen (Carter 2007). This is made explicit in Arpaio's office statements in the body of this press release:

Late last night, after the operation concluded, Sheriff's patrol deputies made a traffic stop outside Gila Bend and arrested seven persons including six illegal immigrants and one US citizen. The U.S. citizen arrested for human smuggling was Steven Jones, a Caucasian male. Jones admitted to being involved in this incident of human smuggling in order to pay off a debt owed to a drug dealer.

Throughout the discussion there is never a mention of the race of the "six illegal immigrants" and none of the "illegal immigrants" or "illegal aliens" mentioned in the other 77 press releases and when these Latinos/as are arrested by the Sheriff's office they're only described in this manner. Juxtaposing this with an explicit clarification of "Steven Jones" racial identity as "Caucasian" or white, the racialization of the immigrant arrestees is clear, they are not white. Under the discursive logic of the press release they are instead designated as "illegal" and in the US where citizenship and race are often conflated the race of these "illegal" immigrants is clearly not white.

By implementing these discourses the sheriff's office is attempting to mask its disproportionate policing and racial profiling of Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as living in

Phoenix. The sheriff's office redirects its racism to a discussion of citizenship in the clarification of Steven Jones' race to illustrate their actions as motivated by laws pertaining to citizenship and not about illegal racial profiling. However, their clarifications only magnify their racism and through their colorblind ideological stance the sheriff's office doesn't address the race of the immigrants but points out in every instance where they arrest non-Latino "Caucasians" or other non-Latinos/as, such as one instance where they arrested a person from a non-central/south American nation for "illegal immigration". The Sheriff's office approach to a colorblind policing becomes a tactic to hide their racist practices.

In the above quote from 1/31/11 press release, we see the sheriff's office notes the US citizen as a "Caucasian". The recognition of this person's whiteness and citizenship are part of their colorblind shielding process. In light of the DOJ's heavy scrutiny, the sheriff's office is attempting to highlight a frontstage (Houts Picca and Feagin 2007) that is colorblind, and claim that they are willing to arrest "anyone who breaks the law." And as I mentioned before in an 8/12/11 press release the Sheriff's office arrests another immigrant that is not of Latino ancestry, but instead is Jamaican. The office notes that this is the third Jamaican arrested within the year and capitalizes on this small immigrant presence to illustrate that their policing of immigration is colorblind. The sheriff states, "The influx of Jamaican drug organizations involving illegal immigrants vividly indicates that these criminal activities do not only involve Hispanics" (Sheriff's office press release 8/12/11). The sheriff's office again utilizes a colorblind rhetoric to deflect any attempts to describe their policing as racism directed at

Latino/a ancestry people.

Later in the 1/31/11 press release the Sheriff is quoted and is explicitly using this colorblind frontstage approach, shielding him and his office from charges of racism and racist practices. He says:

“Department of Justice officials are currently here in town interviewing my officers pursuant to a lawsuit filed by the US government against me and my officers for alleged racial profiling. This arrest, I believe, shows yet again that my deputies arrest anyone who breaks the law, regardless of race, gender or national origin,” Arpaio says (January 31, 2011 Maricopa County Sheriff’s office).

Continuing their colorblind stance, Arpaio’s office argues that any lawbreakers irrespective of race gender or national origin will be arrested. This colorblind approach creates a climate wherein the practices of the Sheriffs office and the discourse it presents are incongruous. Colorblind rhetoric allows the sheriffs office to create a discursive climate in Phoenix where the Latino/a population is under constant surveillance while absolving the sheriff’s office of any racism or terrorism.

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s office webpage has a heavy focus on curtailing, policing and mitigating what they characterize as “illegal immigration.” Typical sheriff’s offices throughout the US do not have such a focus on border security. Joe Arpaio’s offices have taken an especially aggressive and racist stance toward immigration and describing their practices as based in the law deflects their racist practices.

*Criminalization of Latinas/os*

The second theme, is the criminalization of Latinas/os which has a specific focus on how the Sheriff's office conflates immigration and criminal activity (Dowling and Inda 2013). This conflation occurs in two ways, through the use of the phrases such as "illegal immigration" and "illegal alien" and through the regular pairing of this phrase with criminal activities such as drug smuggling. I argue that this acts as a discursive slight of hand that, again, enables the sheriff's office to present its actions as merely the enforcement of race neutral law, by drawing on the moral panics associated with illegal immigrants and illegal drugs.

Out of the 95 press releases from 2011 45 (47.4%) directly used the phrasing of "Illegal Immigrant" or "Illegal Alien" to refer to people whom they arrested for not being able to prove their US citizenship "on the spot." The sheriff's office used this to refer to individuals who had not had been proven/tried in court based on their offences. This means these individuals citizenship status has yet to be proven in a court of law. Their violations were circumstantial such as failure to have proper identification or claims of false identification by the sheriff's office and it was unclear as to whether or not these individuals were actually undocumented immigrants. The practices of the Sheriff's office illustrate a guilty until proven innocent tactic regarding immigration and immigrants. They assumed that these individuals presence in the United States immediately made them a criminal. More importantly the discourse used by the office illustrates its purposeful conflation of criminality, citizenship, and race.

Despite this practice the office utilized an even more insidious discourse to deepen the connection between criminality and immigrant Latinas/os. Namely they



accomplished this by regularly inserting a discourse about drugs and criminal activity into the narrative of “illegal immigrants” in the press releases. This means that their press releases often reported in the same press release the capture of “illegal immigrants,” “drug activity,” and “human smuggling.” In a 3/2/11 press release the Sheriff is quoted utilizing a criminalization narrative regarding immigrants, he says:

‘Yesterday’s arrests shows [sic] that the problem of smuggling drugs and illegal aliens seems out of control and is continuing within Maricopa County. I will soon be conducting a massive operation directed at the invasion of drugs and illegal aliens in the valley to include Phoenix very soon (3/2/11 Sheriff Arpaio’s Press Release).

The sheriff’s statements draw on two discursive elements to create a criminal immigrant Latino/a: fear of invading Latino/a people and the fear of the invasion of drugs. Over the course of these 45 press releases there is a regular conflation of immigration and criminality. By establishing an immediate connection between crime and immigrants the sheriff’s office is able to justify and rationalize their racist practices. Like the colorblind surveillance strategy, the conflation of immigration and crime attempts to deflect charges of racism directed at the Sheriff’s office by the DOJ and the Latino/a community. In the front stage, i.e. the press releases, the sheriffs office is able to present an organizational self focused on “enforcing the law” while in the backstage or in practice there is a heavy policing of Latino/a people.

In a 9/29/11 press release, there is a clear assumption that these individuals are acting as criminals who intend to break the laws and purposefully “thumbing their nose” at the sheriffs office. Sheriff Arpaio is quoted in the press release:

Molinar avoided arrest along with nine others and had the audacity to return to the work place...this is one example of illegal aliens thumbing their nose at this office and the laws against illegal immigration. The investigation into the owner of the Days Inn, who hired Molinar, continues (9/29/11 Sheriff’s office Press Release).

Again we see a tone set by the office wherein the discursive conflation of immigrants as criminals and criminal immigrants is manifest. The use of the phrase “illegal alien” is coupled with the argument that these immigrants are purposefully and unabashedly breaking the law, despite many arguments and studies showing the fear, danger and risk of life and limb endured by many immigrants. The sheriff’s office treats them as though they are flippantly and aggressively targeting the Sheriff and the criminal justice system. The sheriff’s office creates a criminal immigrant vis-à-vis a preexisting discussion of what constitutes a criminal. Popular discourse of criminals describe them as scheming or flippant about their crime, many are portrayed as desiring the death of police or law enforcement (Reiman 2001). The office then couples this discourse with a pre-existing discussion of immigrants as criminals (Santa Ana 2003, Chavez 2008). The result is a discussion of the immigrant who is criminal and the criminal who is an immigrant.

Yet this conflation doesn’t stop with this discursive formula, instead we see that as Chavez (2008) has noted, the racist discourse about immigrants has come to be placed

on all Latino/a people living in the boundaries of the U.S. Consequently, the Sheriff's office, by drawing on and conflating these racist discourse, facilitates a space of oppression for all Latinas/os living in Phoenix. The discursive practice of drawing these connections create a racial climate in phoenix that terrorizes, criminalizes, and disproportionately impacts, not just immigrant Latino/a people but all Latino/a people in the space—this includes the Middleclass respondents in this research.

### *Maricopa County as a White Space*

The third theme for Phoenix is the narrative of Maricopa county (phoenix metro area) as a White Space. Under this theme there is a building on existing narratives of all Latinas/os as foreigners and criminal immigrants. By ramping up the discourse of invasion it is pushed to its logical end—white isolationism (Bonilla Silva 2006). The Sheriff's office's narratives become primarily about how they will keep Maricopa County free of immigrants, drugs, and other criminal activity and, again, draws on preexisting racist discourse that flattens the Latino/a community into one singular group. As the Sheriff's office narrates a campaign to keep Maricopa county safe from immigrant criminals we see that this is also about the policing and maintenance of Maricopa County as white. Implicit in this narrative is that the space itself is a pure space being invaded. Many race scholars have noted that the maintenance of whiteness often is manifest in discourse about the violation of the purity of whiteness (Harris 1993)—myth of the black rapist of white women, manifest destiny, Latino/a invasion. In this case we see that because it is coupled with existing racial narratives about immigrant criminals the narratives of invasions also become equally racialized.

In a 3/29/11 press release, the Sheriff's office deploys these tropes of the invasion of white purity. In particular they are launching a new surveillance and policing campaign, "Operation Desert Sky," aimed at reducing the presence of drug smuggling and immigrants in Maricopa county. Quoting Sheriff Arpaio the press release reveals the intentions of this operation,

This will be a far longer and broader strategy by this Sheriff's Office to deter illegal immigration as well as the flow of narcotics into Maricopa County (Sheriff Arpaio's office press release 3/29/11).

The sheriff's office has as its main goal the tightening and controlling of the space of Maricopa County. The sheriff's statements are direct attempts to create a discursive boundary around the way in which the actions of the Sheriff's office are interpreted. While using the language of immigrants as criminals and tying immigration with drug smuggling we see that the sheriff's office adds that the space itself must be maintained as a pure space. It is a space that the office will "deter the flow" of immigrants and narcotics. Moreover, deterring the flow also implies that there is a presence that is not wanted in the space. This implicit exclusion is directed, not only at immigrant Latino/as, but all Latino/a people living in Maricopa County. Statements of invasion and the subsequent sealing of space all stem from a recognition of the present space as problematic or in this case as having too many Latino/a people in it.

Later in this same 3/29/11 press release this drawing of a boundary around whiteness and white space becomes most clear as the sheriff's office uses language of border/boundary making. They state:

Arpaio's aim: to essentially seal the county border from the growing invasion of drug and human traffickers. Arpaio says he is confident that the operation will result in a number of arrests and seizures but as important, the operation's aim is to act as a deterrent to keep criminals from entering the county

The sheriff's office explicitly states their goals are to "seal" the county from criminals; as he's noted criminals largely constitute Latino/a ancestry immigrants. This language is congruent with Bonilla-Silva's (2006) arguments about white self-segregation wherein whites show preference for spaces that are predominantly or all white. The sheriff's office narrates this white self segregation, focusing on how they can "seal" or "deter the flow" of Latino/as into the space.

In a press release from 9/2/11 the Sheriff's office states the following about Maricopa county:

Sheriff Arpaio says The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office has arrested and investigated 50,000 illegal aliens on the streets in Maricopa County and in our jails, including illegal immigrants who have infiltrated city, county, and federal agencies in the work place.

In this example the linkage between the criminalization of immigrants and Latino/a people is clear, but importantly the focus here is on how these "illegal Immigrants" have infiltrated the city spaces. Moreover this press release shows how the sheriff's office is also willing to press this racist paranoia and claim that immigrants have "even infiltrated the city, county and federal agencies." From the pages of a sci-fi film, the Sheriff's

office facilitates the invasion of the white governmental/city/spatial/human body(ies) present in Maricopa county. Creating understandings of Latinos/as as invaders of white spaces maintains the othering practice of segregation felt by my respondents in their narratives about their racial identities and citizenship (see Chapter VI) and represented in their aforementioned cognitive mappings. By drawing on the discourse of invasion and maintaining Maricopa County as a white space, the Sheriff's office creates a racial climate where Latino/a people living in Maricopa county are the racial other; their family members, friends, colleagues, and ultimately they too are perceived to be contaminating and invading white space.

Under these three themes we see that the space of Phoenix contains a climate that maintains an understanding of Latinas/os as racial other through the discourse of colorblind surveillance, criminalization of Latino/a people, and through the narrative of Maricopa county as a white space. This climate is facilitated by the discourse and actions of the Maricopa county sheriff's office which ultimately takes a racist stance on the presence of Latino/a people living in these spaces. This white racism facilitates a racial climate hostile to Latino/a people and to how they understand their racial selves. As they live under these processes of racialization their racial selves become more and more constrained so much so that their Latino/a identities become flat and static.

### **Conclusion**

The goals of this chapter were to address the questions about the racial climate of two caramel cities: San Antonio and Phoenix. Each city has a significant Mexican ancestry population and historical climate, yet they both are overtly hostile to the

Latino/a communities living in each. As each respondent provided me with a clear understanding of how the city they live in is racially segregated, few of them hesitated in their statements about how whites consistently had access to the best education, community, and public resources in their respective cities.

The Alamo narrative has long served as the flashpoint for numerous calls for white supremacy (Flores 2002, Gomez 2008) and its recent iteration of a historical present on the Alamo Webpage serves to maintain this white supremacist icon. By creating a history of Latino/a people as venal, invaders who denied “freedom” from white men, we see the creation of a dialectic with whites as brave and virtuous. Juxtaposing each group in the historical timeline as oppositional creates a present rife with racial inequalities. San Antonio’s Alamo narrative reifies and reinscribes the racial context of the space, the history is written to support and maintain the racial status quo. It facilitates a White occupied, owned, and governed city that has historically and will continue to be a white only space.

Similarly Phoenician history reflects just a similar present, however, the whites in the space rely less overtly this history to maintain their dominance. Rather, there is a significant amount of brute force coupled with volatile racist discourse about the Latino/a community present in the space; spearheaded by a few whites who hold significant office, Gov. Jan Brewer, Former State Representative Russell Pearce and Sheriff Joe Arpaio. I focused on the discourse coming from the Sheriff’s office because it is a significant state entity, one that is capable of having a direct presence in the lives

of Latino/a people<sup>20</sup>. By this I mean the Sheriff's office, differs from the legislature or governorship in that they have direct contact with people through their policing, raids, and surveillance. With an actively racist agenda the Sheriff's office spews out approximately 100 press releases every year and in 2011 there were 95 total press releases. These press releases illustrated a climate where Latino/a people are criminal invaders, much like the discursive climate in San Antonio, yet added a more direct tone of whiteness and whiteness as an asset to be protected.

The racist discourse of San Antonio and Phoenix creates spaces where the middle class Latino/a people must find a means to redirect or renegotiate who they are understood to be. They know processes of racialization are significant. If we look to the epigraph for this chapter the histories of these two spaces illustrate there has long been Latino/a populations in these spaces and our ancestors have traveled north and south of these cities for centuries. However, as Lefebvre notes, the space is assumed to have been empty prior to white occupation and it is this assumed emptiness that leads to the formation of a history of the present regarding the Alamo as well as the formation of an oppressive regime through Arpaio's office. This chapter highlights an overall climate or tone of each city space. The cognitive maps are the physical manifestation of a racialized experience in space had by the Latino/a people I interviewed. While not a comprehensive accounting of the discourse of a city, the discourse present in each have a significant impact on the Latino/a communities living in each of these cities

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<sup>20</sup> Dylan Rodriguez (2009) argues that the white oppression of the state is a unique entity that is able to at one moment be a solid social structure and the next a fluid entity entering the everyday lives. This was the case for these Latino/a people as the racist whites running the state were able to reach into their lives on a regular and everyday basis through the discursive practices I mentioned above.



In the next Chapter I highlight the approaches middleclass Latino/a people use to address the racial climates of these spaces. Given that each space contains ubiquitous tones of white supremacy, Latino/a people must negotiate and distance their self from these white supremacist understandings of who they are. This means they consistently deploy a racial self that distances and/or redirects racist understandings of who they are, while attempting to “make discursive room” for their own interpretations and narratives to fill the vacuum created by this deflection. To be clear, the Latino/a people in this research didn’t talk about racial oppression in the same categorical manner as I have in this chapter and these categories should be conceptualized broadly as typifications of discourse and white supremacist tones present in the city at large. In the following chapters I provide more specific examples of how these typifications may be manifest in an everyday sense but not in a direct, one-to-one example of each.

## CHAPTER V

### “NO SHAME IN MY GAME:” NEGOTIATING WHITE RACISM AND

### MIDDLECLASS MEXICAN AMERICAN RACIAL IDENTITIES

*So it depends on when a picture is taken in this sequence and on who takes the picture as to whether race is best understood as fluid or solid or vapor –or has evaporated into a temporally locatable nonexistence, a color-blind fragment in time and space.*

*–Troy Duster From “The Morphing Properties of Whiteness”*

*Whatever all our mixed emotions are, we are going to play the game.*

*–W.E.B. Dubois from “As the Crow Flies” quoted in D.L. Lewis W. E. B. Du Bois, 1919-*

*1963: The Fight for Equality and the American Century*

*You? You are not me.*

*Me? I am possibly everything, plus everything that is not me.*

*– Das Racist from the song “Rainbow in the Dark”*

### **Introduction**

Popular discourse about Latinas/os and their identities speak to a very specific type of Latina/o person living in the United States and highlight the narrow range of selves made available by the White controlled U.S. racial structures. These discourse are summarily echoed as: “dark-skinned, dark-haired, and dark-eyed,” “only speaks Spanish, is an immigrant, is working class or poor, is a criminal and lives in a certain geographic

space”<sup>21</sup>. Under these discourse there is a conflation of the characteristics associated with phenotype, class, citizenship and place of residence into a single conceptualization of Latinas/os living in the United States (Rodriguez 2000, Inda 2000, Santa Ana 2002, Guzman 2005, Gomez 2007, Guidotti-Hernández 2007, Chavez 2008, Davila 2008, Molina 2010). Ultimately this discourse reinscribes, maintains, and is organized by racial structures and racial hierarchies in the United States.

Beyond just San Antonio and Phoenix we see that scholarship on Latinas/os has shown the ubiquity of these discourses and how they oppress Latinas/os throughout the United States (Davila 2001, Santa Ana 2002, Cobas, Duane, Feagin 2008). Latinas/os have been discursively maimed, attacked, and threatened time and again (Noriega 1992, Fregoso 1993, Rodriguez 1997, Feagin 2002, Davila 2008). Latinas/os have been compared to and associated with animalism (Santa Ana 2002), parasites (Inda 2000), enemies of the nation-state (Mehan 1997), invaders of a nation/house (Romero and Serag 2004, Santa Ana 2002), crime prone gang members (Vigil 1988, Romero 2001, Duran 2009), and deemed to be lazy and inferior (Deleon 1983).

To understand the ubiquity of these discourse many scholars point to the historically rooted and ever-present racial hierarchies in the United States that inscribe racialization in everyday interaction (Omi and Winant 1994, Feagin 2001, 2006, Bonilla Silva 2002, Bonilla Silva & Glover 2004). Under these hierarchies Latinas/os encounter this racist discourse as a systematic, institutional, and everyday part of life and it is

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<sup>21</sup> See Van Dijk 1993 and Davila 2001, 2008 for a discussion of how the discourse is constructed by elites and marketers.

fundamental to how they negotiate their racial selves (Rodriguez 2000, Cobas, Duaney, and Feagin 2008, Goldsmith et. al. 2009). Middleclass Latinas/os also encounter these stereotypes in their everyday lives (Cobas and Feagin 2008, Agius Vallejo 2012). However, a classed form of racialization tints their experiences and often they are mistaken for custodial staff or as immigrant service workers (Romero 2002). These everyday classed racializations require these Latinas/os to negotiate their identities in different ways than their compatriots who are poor or working class.

Past research has provided little in the way of how these discourses affect middleclass U.S. Latinas/os practices of the self, identity strategies, and the counter-discourses they employ to express their identities. This chapter discusses how racial climates in Phoenix and San Antonio impacts the identities of middleclass Mexican ancestry Latinas/os . By drawing on the narratives from the 67 interviews I ask how do middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latinas/os discursively interpret and negotiate these racist discourses about their selves? How do they talk about the strategies they use for deflecting, circumventing or generally avoiding racist conceptualizations of who they are? How are these narratives and strategies congruent with past arguments about the impact of racial hierarchies on Latinas/os? Broadly speaking, answering these questions bears on sociological understandings of how social class intersects with practices of identity negotiation in the U.S. racial hierarchy..

Middleclass Latinas/os use different strategies to negotiate their identities, but often many used “identity-not” discursive practices (Mullaney 1999, 2001, 2006) for the construction of their middleclass Latina/o selves; talking about what *they are not* to

highlight what *they are*. The middleclass Latinas/os I interviewed used these “identity-not” strategies to distance, counter, negotiate, and generally deflect the discursive logics of the U.S. racial hierarchy (Van Dijk 1993, Feagin 2001, 2003, Bonilla Silva 2006). I argue that “identity-not” *deflection practices* enable a specific means for middleclass Latinas/os to negotiate the discursive logics of U.S. racial structures. Latinas/os in this research both employ and oppose these discursive logics, as attempts to redirect racialized othering processes aimed at them. Such “identity not” deflection practices are attempts to provide a clear demarcation of “who they are” in relation to White people, Black people, and other Latinas/os. The primary focus of this chapter is to illustrate the processes of deflection, not to measure the effectiveness of these deflections, though the effectiveness is discussed, it is not empirically illustrated in this chapter.

### **White Racial Framing, Deflection Practices, and Racial Hierarchies**

Joe Feagin and Jose Cobas have addressed this issue of, what I term, *deflection practices* in their extensive research on the Latina/o middleclass. They (also see Cobas and Feagin 2008) argue that Latinas/os in “positions of authority” deploy white racial framings and stereotypes about other Latinas/os and Black Americans (2008). Feagin and Cobas believe that the deployment of the discursive logics of the white racial frame represent Latina's/o's “internalization” of these logics (2008:41). Adding that these internalized conceptualizations are largely the consequence of the “continuing white control of educational systems and the media” (Feagin and Cobas 2008:49). Feagin and Cobas (2008) conclude that the results of this internalization is the “procrustean bed of

assimilation” or a forced acceptance of white controlled discourses and practices for accessing middleclass resources.

Their conclusions about whites in the U.S controlling the racial hierarchies, controlling access to resources and middleclass spaces, and controlling dominant conceptualizations of all people of color are all useful for this chapter. In particular they inform my understanding of why *deflection practices* are deployed by middleclass Latinas/os. By building on their critical analysis I show that Latinas/os are regularly deflecting racism in their everyday lives and that these deflections have a significant impact on how their racial identities are interpreted and contextualized in the racial hierarchies of the United States.

Feagin and Cobas also illuminate one means for conceptualizing structural hierarchies of the U.S.. Under their framework we see that middleclass Latinas/os encounter a white created racial hierarchy that consists of “white and racialized other.” Under this conceptualization Latinas/os, irrespective of their class or phenotypical characteristics are, coded as racialized other once their racial identities are made known. This means that the availability of self imposed Latina/o identity is significantly shaped by this racial binary, resulting in a largely white defined racial-self. However, recognizing that these Latinas/os access the privileges of whiteness, either through their phenotype or class status (neighborhood amenities, occupational networks, or general wealth) or other identity practices, necessarily complicates this white/other racial hierarchy. Accessing whiteness, even if it is indirectly or momentarily, as this is the case

almost all the Latino/a people in this research, means that it is in some capacity available to middleclass Latinas/os (Haney Lopez 2003).

Bonilla Silva (2002, 2006) argues that the racial hierarchy, while clearly one of whites on top is stratified with an “honorary white” buffer zone between “white” on top and “collective black” on the bottom<sup>22</sup>. Reflecting the Latin American model of a stratified racial hierarchy, Latinas/os in the US are able to gain access to whiteness with varying degrees of success as they fall along the continuum. For middleclass Latinas/os this sheds some light on the way in which processes of racialization are occurring as they can, depending on their phenotype gain access to white coded resources.

However, Bonilla Silva’s analytics, as with Feagin and Cobas do not directly address the intersection of class. As this chapter shows the racial hierarchies, once class is addressed as a factor impacting processes of racialization, are more fluid<sup>23</sup> in an everyday context for many Latinas/os than our current analytics describe. The racial climates of Phoenix and San Antonio, are spaces that are to be negotiated and navigated. To be clear this is a middle class phenomenon, negotiation and navigation are about power relations, and for the middleclass their strategies of identity represent a shift in normative power relations (oppressor/oppressed or oppressor/buffer/oppressed). In fact, Haney Lopez’s (2003) arguments about Latinas/os ability to lay claim to whiteness are

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<sup>22</sup> Also see Saenz and Murgia 2002 discussion of how this ternary has always existed for Latino/a people living in the US. Their arguments state that the ternary is not new for Latino/a people.

<sup>23</sup> I do not mean for this to convey that Latino/a people can move anywhere they want in the US racial hierarchy. It is meant to convey the shifting of privilege based on class and race intersecting and interacting. Moreover, this intersection is very contextual and the degree to which this fluidity is occurring is not measured here. I argue that they are accessing indicators of whiteness which does not mean the totality of their racial selves is white especially not in the eyes of the whites who control the racial hierarchies.

far truer than our analytics allow them to be, the consequences of this agency results in an analytics that neglect the ways middleclass Latinas/os negotiate both racial hierarchies and their racial selves.

### **Negotiating Racist Discourse and Narrating the Self**

The everyday discourse that surrounds Latino/a people portrays us as a “problem”(Santa Ana 2002, Chavez 2008) and often middleclass Latinas/os try to distance their selves from this pervasive discourse via identity not *deflection practices*. To address how Latinas/os use identity not *deflection practices* to respond to racist discourse I focus on their narratives about their use of three identity not strategies: wielding dominant narratives, overtly deflecting stereotypes, and class mitigation. Each of the following sections addresses the “identity not” discursive strategies used by Latinas/os to negotiate the racial climates of Phoenix and San Antonio. Though they are not exhaustive in addressing every strategic route taken by Latinas/os for negotiating racism, they do highlight the varied moments of identity malleability and stability for middleclass Latinas/os in a context of shifting racial hierarchies.

#### *Wielding the dominant narrative, ‘I’m not that kind of Latino...’*

Middleclass Latinas/os describe their racial self in a very clear manner of ‘I’m not that kind of Latina/o’ or ‘I’m not your typical Latina/o’. They recognize the impact of racial hierarchies and discourses on how their racial self is structured. These constraints are made clear when Latina/o interviewees’ self-understandings were contrary to the available racist discourse. Moreover, this racist discourse confined



Latinas/os narratives of the self to a narrow “either/or” experience, Mullaney (2006) describes how this is related to identity not narratives:

Limitations of language—whether they be ones of invisibility or inadequacy—pose a fundamental problem for those who base their identities in part on not-doing: an ability to capture the locus of the self. Certainly this dilemma extends to ‘doers,’ as well, since the available terms often force individuals to describe themselves in a cut-and-dried, black and white manner, that is as doers or not-doers (2006).

For middleclass Latinas/os deployment of the *wielding dominant narratives* strategy often results in a self that is a *racialized abstraction*—they don’t articulate who they are in a direct way rather only indirectly as what they are not. The racialized abstraction is a relational self, as it is only experienced relative to the racist narratives about Latinas/os. As Latinas/os deploy the *strategy of wielding dominant narratives* they negotiate their self, but always within the confines of the racial hierarchies of the U.S. One professional, Maria an art director from Phoenix highlights this:

Maria: I don’t look like a typical Latin American<sup>24</sup> person.

Interviewer: Ok. What would be typical?

Maria: People think of Latin American’s as dark or colored skin tone a little darker hair, brown eyes.

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<sup>24</sup> Respondent used Latino/a, Mexican American, and Latin American interchangeably, which was a common practice for many of my interviewees. In fact many would use a plethora of racial identifiers such as Hispanic, Mexican-American, Mexican, and Latino/a to name only a few but they were all responding in reference to my use of the phrase Latino/a.

She illustrates how these racialized understandings are related to stereotypical discourse about Latinas/os by acknowledging how “people” “typically” think about Latinas/os. She doesn’t fit in a narrow conceptualization of Latinas/os as only dark haired, skinned and eyed rather she believes that as a Latina she should be narrated differently namely as a racialized abstraction. Her statements don’t explicitly reflect the internalization of these discourse rather she benignly conveys a realization that these understandings emanate outside of her own conceptualizations of Latina/o people. This is the case for many Latinas/os these strategies are related to their recognition of how other “people” perceive or think about Latinas/os generally but still understand that these discourse are something that they too must negotiate.

For Latinas/os in this research these discourse are, at best, ill-suited for narrating their racial self instead many deflect them by the strategy of *wielding the dominant narrative*. Many use adjectives to describe what constitutes a ‘typical’ Latina/o and to illustrate that ‘I’m not that kind of Latina/o.’ It conveys an understanding of who they are relative to the dominant narratives while ultimately deflecting racist discourse. To be clear they still identify as Latina/o just not a Latina/o described in the dominant racist discourse. By wielding the dominant narrative Latinas/os deflect racist assumptions about their racial self.

This deflection practice indicates a self that is contrary or different from the dominant conceptualization of Latinas/os. The previous example shows that she is Latina/o but only has narrative space for the abstraction of “not your typical Latina/o.” Her *abstraction* is congruent with Mullaney’s (2006) argument about the not doers

“[in]ability to capture the locus of the self.” As middleclass Latinas/os form an ‘identity not’ in relation to the racist hierarchies, the discursive logics of U.S. racial hierarchies are incongruous with their own self conceptualization. In turn they appropriate space for an identity—specifically this space is for the clarification of an ‘identity not’ *racialized abstraction*.

Zelda, a college student from San Antonio clarifies this in her discussion of differences in dress between Whites [Americans<sup>25</sup>] and Latinas/os.

Growing up, I wasn't like other Mexicans [or] like Latinas. I didn't dress like they did. I would dress more American-style than Mexican-style, you know...I see the American-style as more preppy; more you know, the nice jeans, nice shirts. I see Mexicans, they just wear whatever, or gangster type in looser pants, baggy shirts like that.

She deploys a strategy highlighting the difference between herself and other Latinas/os by wielding racist narratives about different styles of dress. This provides a specific example of how she is different from other Latinas/os and, congruent with other Latinas/os in this research, she creates an “identity not.” Believing that she was raised with a different racial understanding than other Latinas/os she ultimately claims it is reflected in her more White clothing choices. “Growing up, I wasn't like other Mexicans [or] like Latinas...I would dress more [White]-style...” She illustrates how many Latinas/os in this research use the strategy of wielding dominant narratives for deflection

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<sup>25</sup> This respondent uses the phrase American and Anglo interchangeably which was common for many of my interviewees. Agius Vallejo 2012 encountered a very similar practice among her interviewees. See Chapter VI for further discussion on this topic and its significance for the identities of middleclass Mexican Americans.

as she juxtaposes her own Latina/o identity with that of a dominant racist script about Latinas/os.

Like other Latinas/os, she recognizes that she is Latina/o however, also wants to show that she is not like the dominant narrative. This respondent's use of the phrase "other Mexicans" implicitly locates her as a Latina/o yet, enables a transition into the deflection of problematic identities associated with Latinas/os such as racialized gangsterism. To fully accomplish her distancing she wields the script to illustrate that she is not a part of the racialized gangster Latina/o narrative (Duran 2009) instead she is somewhere in-between whiteness and Latinaness—she is a racialized *abstraction*.

Her discursive move (Van Dijk 1993) deflects problematic discourse and enables access to a contextual and contingent space for her identity. However this example is particularly interesting because she is attempting to align herself with whiteness. This means that the processes of *racialized abstraction* can allow some respondents to get closer to whiteness on the ternary racial hierarchy and deflect, via wielding, the narratives that would place them in the "collective Black" (Bonilla-Silva 2004, 2006) part of the hierarchy. Many Latinas/os in this research access more latitude with regard to their racial identifications through the wielding of narratives that would racialize them as part of the "collective black".

Moreover Zelda's experience also highlights the way in which race and citizenship intersect, as she conflates American with being white. Being that she is 1.5 generation turned U.S. citizen at an early age, her desires to move up the racial hierarchy and move away from the collective black, non-citizen, poor/working class bottom rung

of the racial hierarchy is, according to her, the best option (see Chapter VI). She realizes that access to whiteness enables simultaneous access to different material resources (even if they are assumed in the everyday as is the case with citizenship). Her deployment of this distancing strategy draws on the cultural logics of a venal Mexican in San Antonio and it moves her toward a virtuous, non-gangster white racial identity.

Lorena, a professional from Arizona, highlights the practice of *wielding of dominant narratives* and how it deflects racism. Her statements further illustrate the complex relationship Latinas/os have with citizenship and race as she talks about how her family draws distinctions between their “Hispanic” identity and Mexican immigrants.

No they never sat down and said this is what you should expect or anything. It was always just like, “well you know we’re Hispanic. We’re not Mexicans or wetbacks.” They use the word “wetback” a lot. They’re like “Oh so and so’s nothing but a wetback”...They don’t consider themselves [to be wetbacks].

She illustrates how discourses are wielded to distance their racial selves from othered Latinas/os in the racial hierarchy and to provide a *racialized abstraction* space for their own identities. Her family wields a dominant narrative as a distancing strategy in the epithet “wetback,” then backfills the available narrative space with “Hispanic”. This strategy of *racialized abstraction* highlights how the racialization process is tied to citizenship; Hispanic is often a marker of second plus generations of Latinas/os whereas nationality (Mexican) or the epithet (wetback) carries the implication of recent

immigration. Chavez (2008) illustrates how immigrant Latinas/os are a threat because of their discourse bound up in their racialized citizenship. This Latina's statements illustrate how many Latinas/os must distance their selves from this racialized discourse for fear of being conceptualized as a non-citizen. This means that they use the wielding of dominant narratives (wetback) to clearly demarcate the difference between their self (Hispanic) and recent immigrants from Mexico.

In the context of Phoenix, this distancing is a means for distancing these Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people from the derogatory "illegal alien/immigrant" narrative coming from Sheriff Joe's press releases. With a continuous bombardment of racist understandings of who Latino/as are supposed to be in Phoenix, the means for deploying a racial self is constrained by the racial climate of the space. Rather than deny that they are Latino/a, which isn't an option even if they tried, these individuals must figure out how they can create a distance from who they are perceived to be and who they believe they actually are in their everyday lives. One means for constructing this distance is to wield the dominant racist narrative of "Mexican as immigrant" or in this case "wetback" or as the Sheriff's office argues "Illegal Alien/immigrant" to show that one is different or 'not like those people.'

To be clear this doesn't mean that these Latinas/os are denying their Latino/a self nor does it illustrate internalization of whiteness per se. Instead they are negotiating these identities through strategies that deflect racism and open the space to be filled with an identity they perceive to be appropriate or "best fitting" their experiences, desires,

needs or generally, their ability to access resources<sup>26</sup>. The Latinas/os, as noted by Feagin and Cobas (2008), didn't make the rules they're only navigating the rules. Sara, from Texas clarifies,

I'm not going to say I play the game, but you have to, to a certain point to be able to succeed.

Her statements underscore her awareness of how racialization processes are present in these spaces and also a recognition that the wielding of these discourse is necessary to gain access to resources and to "succeed." Many Latinas/os in this research "play the game" of racialization to gain access to resources and often their statements reveal an awareness of how one must strategize and negotiate racial hierarchies to access these resources.

For many middleclass Latinas/os the consequences of wielding these discourse and "playing the game" continues to provide limited space for their identities namely in the form of a *racialized abstraction*. This attempt at a *racialized abstraction* illustrates how they're caught in a racial hierarchy of White and racialized Other and they respond by deflecting this racist discourse. However this deflection can also move the interaction into a racial hierarchy of white, honorary white, and collective black. This largely occurs as the deflection process is an explicit attempt to bring Latinas/os closer to whiteness.

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<sup>26</sup> This is about second nature (Bourdieu 1977) as much as it is about rational choice. These individuals "choose" these deflections in the same manner that we all choose during our daily lives. Specifically this should be understood as a combination of Stephen Vaisey's discussion of system 1 & system 2 responses (2009).

*Overtly Deflecting Stereotypes, 'This is who I am'*

For many middleclass Latinas/os these processes of deflection structure their experiences with racial hierarchies in different ways. For some Latinas/os in this research accessing the privileges of whiteness (White or honorary White) was possible through the wielding of White racist discourse. For many Latinas/os this wielding of discourse isn't always possible as racial hierarchies shift and change; through strategies of *overtly deflecting stereotypes* Latinas/os can attempt to distance their self from racism. Because this strategy directly challenges white controlled hierarchies, it rarely yields access to white resources once its been deployed as with the *wielding of dominant narrative* and as I will show with *middleclass mitigation* strategies, it often guarantees Latinas/os will experience a white/other racial hierarchy.

Alejandra, an office administrator from Phoenix, illustrates what *overtly deflecting stereotypes* is and the role its deployment plays for many Latinas/os in this research, in a discussion of how she introduces Mexican American cultural practices to her white employees.

It's my duty to be a good [cultural representative] to provide my White employees with information about my culture, who I am, what I am about, what my people and my history are about, and to stop some of those preconceived notions and ideas my White employees might have.

She believes that educating Whites about her culture (Mexican American) is important for combating stereotypes and "preconceived notions" about Latinas/os. Her preemptive practice of informing her employees is overtly deflecting the racist discourse present in



Phoenix about Latinas/os. Because of her class status, a white coded middle management position, this enables her agency regarding her racial self, i.e. an ability to (re)narrate the self. Fully aware that racist discourse exist and rather than internalizing these narratives by ignoring, hiding, or denying her racial self, she presents a Mexican American culture and self to Whites in the narrative form of her choosing. She is directly addressing these problematic discourse about who she is ‘perceived to be’ and ‘supposed to be’. This is the case for many Latinas/os, as they encounter the discursive logics of the U.S. racial hierarchies, they often deploy *overt stereotype deflection* to rectify, change and distance their self from problematic discourse. This feeling of incongruity and oppression experienced upon encountering racist logics often leads middleclass Latinas/os to deploy *overt stereotype deflection* practices such as educating whites by making them interact with different Latina/o cultural practices or more immediately deflecting these logics by ‘doing’ or ‘narrating’ opposition to or directly challenging these discourse.

Ricardo, a professor from San Antonio illustrates:

... because I am aware of certain stereotypes about the Latino population, I try to reconstruct those stereotypes, myths, [and] those, you know, prejudices...by behaving in a way that opposes those stereotypes. If [people] say “Latinos don’t speak English , they don’t know English, they don’t want to know” or whatever, then I speak English as correct as possible. So that people understand that I actually do speak English. Or if

people say “Latino’s are lazy,” then I try to show that I’m not lazy, by working hard.

For this professor the deflection strategy is a *racialized abstraction* but it is unclear if it allows him to access the white or honorary white space of the racial ternary. While one view of his statements might indicate a possible acquiescence to the racist discourse about Latinas/os, a closer examination of his narrative shows it is contrary to the dominant discourse. He is explicitly stating that he opposes dominant narratives and disagrees with these racist scripts—a significant change from the *wielding of dominant narratives* strategy.

By explicitly not aligning with Whiteness and opposing normative discourse, Latinas/os create an “identity not” narrative space for their racial self. Instead of “playing the game” or *wielding the dominant narrative*, Latinas/os directly address the discourse or “stereotypes, myths and prejudices” in an oppositional manner. Contrary to wielding the discourse, as some Latinas/os do, many Latinas/os overtly counter these responses, “I do speak English” or “I’m not lazy.” This explicit counter-frame (Feagin 2010) represents a specific “identity not” strategy for demarcating a new narrative space for who Middleclass Latinas/os believe they are, rather than merely redirecting these racist logics. This is clearly illustrated by Dan a graduate student, about his family.

Some people they say that Latinos are dirty people or don’t take care of his or her house and family. I try to reinforce the positive things ... I want to show them that I am a family oriented person; they see that and its good.

He illustrates that he is reinforcing “positive” elements of his racial identity. He believes that the deployment of the *overt stereotype deflections* are “good” for people to “see.” Many Latinas/os believe that performing a self that is opposing racist discourse and logics directly alters perceptions of Latinas/os. However, the effectiveness of oppositional deflection is again unclear, especially because the racial hierarchies of the US are white controlled; opposing this control would unlikely yield access to a space other than the identity space of ‘racialized other.’

Unlike those who *wielded dominant narratives*, Latinas/os who deploy *oppositional deflection* aren’t highlighting a direct relationship to whiteness or honorary whiteness. Instead *oppositional deflections* are often a mishmash of Latina/o coded and White coded discursive logics and cultural/social practices. Many Latinas/os perceive this to be in opposition to racist discourse on Latinas/os but it also can be congruent with the stereotypes of this discourse depending on how racial hierarchies are being conceptualized in that particular context. By speaking English ‘well’ “Being a good role-model (family oriented),” “clean,” and “hard working” they deny the racist discourse as a reality, however as racial hierarchies shift and the fluidity of “who is white?” (Duster 2001) shifts these practices can come to be coded differently.

In discussions about yard work with some respondents, who owned their own homes, we see how the context in which this middleclass practice is deployed impacts the racialization of these Latinas/os. Ricardo illustrates this as he points to yard work as one of his most effective oppositional deflection practices,

I actually take good care of my house. For example [I take] good care of my lawn so that I'm showing I can be [like] anyone else in terms of doing those kinds of things.

Like in other examples of oppositional narratives, he is narrating the doing of a self that he believes is in opposition to the discursive logics of Phoenix's racial climate and the racial hierarchies of the U.S. Latinas/os overtly create a space for illustrating who they're not – they're not the “lazy or dirty” person represented in the normative discourse on Latinas/os. However, the trappings of the racial hierarchies of the U.S. still create problems for Latinas/os as they deploy these oppositional practices. We see that *oppositional deflection* can differ in its consequences depending on the racial context. Whereas the previous quote illustrates how some Latinas/os use lawn work as an oppositional strategy the following statements by a Latina manager illustrates how this practice, isn't always effective as such; instead it can work backwards and deny Latinas/os access to the new narrative space.

[A Mexican American friend] was outside mowing his yard, and his [white] neighbor, who just moved in next door, comes out and he says, “How much do you charge per hour?” The [Mexican American friend] looks at him and says, “\$350 per hour.” The guy looks at him and says, “For yard work?” He says, “No, I'm an attorney.” (Yesenia, Phoenix 2011)

In this example we see that the identity not practices of opposing racist discourse that were described by Ricardo, such as hard work and caring for ones home, still locate

Latinas/os within the binary racial hierarchy and doesn't necessarily allow them to access honorary or white status. It also shows how racial hierarchies are contextual for Latinas/os by highlighting the differences in the deployment of *oppositional deflection strategies*.

This successful Latino attorney was trying to adhere to normative middleclass/upper-middleclass conceptualizations of homeownership and care, and in many ways doing the opposite of the stereotypes about Latinas/os (i.e. lazy, unclean, messy home, criminal). Instead of deflection through *wielding dominant narratives* oppositional attempts at deflection signal difference and Otherness to Whites. It is a case of what Troy Duster (2001) describes as the "morphing properties of Whiteness" where we see that adherence to white coded middleclass norms i.e. lawn care doesn't work the same for middleclass Latinas/os as it does for middleclass Whites; who gets to be White is fleeting for Latinas/os. Ultimately who is white was dependent upon White people determining access to Whiteness, and despite attempts to (re)align their racial selves in different ways the racial hierarchy of white/other continued to be reinscribed.

Many Latinas/os are aware of these shifts in the racial hierarchy and they attempted to deploy oppositional deflections accordingly. Yet, Whites control racialization and the racial climates of these cities circumscribe the racial selves available for Latino/a people as racial others. This, in the end, reinscribes the prevailing racial hierarchy as *oppositional deflection* fails or fits with White normative conceptualizations of Latinas/os. To be clear, as Feagin and Cobas (2008) point out,

these hierarchies are White controlled and Latinas/os are only minimally given access to their resources (even if they live in the same neighborhood!).

*Middleclass Class Mitigation, 'but I'm middleclass'*

Class Mitigation uses elements similar to that of *wielding narratives* and *oppositional* deflection practices. However, the deployment of this experience is tinted by the presence of certain class-based expectations for how these Latinas/os think about their selves. To be clear, class becomes a factor these respondents feel mitigates or deflects processes of racialization. Because the U.S racial system is only contextually influenced by class and more often by racial histories, discourses, and hierarchies, the deployment of these strategies are often met with minimal results in the form of degrees of access to honorary white resources. Often these class elements are expressed in relation to characteristics associated with middleclass education, objects, and consumptive practices. These are not the sole means for understanding class status but they do provide more salient understandings of how class impacts racial identities. Moreover these elements aren't the only signifiers of class status as Bourdieu (1984 also see Lamont 2000) thoroughly illustrated class signifiers are related to a bevy of practices even bodily comportment.

Similar to the *wielding strategy*, *class mitigation*, largely serves to provide a buffer between Middleclass Latinas/os and the narratives on Latinas/os as criminals, poor/working class, and as recent immigrants. Generally it works to distance Middleclass Latinas/os from Latinas/os who are part of the lowest rungs of the racial hierarchies. As these respondents reflected upon their class, race, and citizenship status

in different situations they regularly felt at odds with their experience. This means that the heart of the *middleclass mitigation* strategy lies at the intersection of class, race, and citizenship. Jaime a real estate agent from the San Antonio illustrates this strategy by pointing out that not every immigrant from Latin America should be lumped into the same category.

The fact that they are trying to put everybody at the same level just because you come from a particular region in the world. So “all Latinos are the same and behave the same.” Like some of the stereotypes about Latinos “they’re lazy or they are all drug dealers or bad people...or if you come from Latin America, you don’t have a degree, you only come here to do floors and make beds.” Lots of people that come here and do those things, but they do it because they have no choice. Those misconceptions bother me.

Jaime is aware of the conflation of race, citizenship, and class status. He is aware that he must continually negotiate the racialized-class stereotypes of Latinas/os as domestic service workers. He recognizes that stemming from racialization are assumptions about his class and citizenship. His statements about being placed “on the same level” as other Latinas/os underscores how many in this research experience being ‘at odds’ with their class status and racial status. He recognizes that he is Latina/o however he is fearful of being considered a service worker which carries with it very specific race and citizenship narratives (Romero and Serag 2004). Like many Latinas/os he believes that his class status should mitigate the effects of the “Latino threat narrative” (Chavez 2008) or

specifically the racial narratives of San Antonio. Many Latinas/os encounter this experience on a daily basis, as they're regularly mistaken for custodial staff, recent immigrants, or generally treated poorly.

Olivia a university professor expresses a similar response to other Latinas/os when asked about these stereotypes, she responded,

Daniel: Do you feel like people assume those [previously mentioned assumptions about Latinas/os as service workers] things about you? That you don't maybe have a PhD?

Olivia: Oh yeah some people.

Daniel: Maybe they assume that you're here to clean the floors?

Olivia: Oh yeah! Yeah some people think that.

Olivia was treated as though she didn't have a PhD despite being employed as a professor and working at a very large, and prestigious university. As they experience this many Latinas/os must negotiate their identities in these contexts. They often deploy markers of middleclass status to illustrate their positions in the racial hierarchy.

To clarify how these middleclass mitigation strategies are deployed, Jenny from San Antonio, reflects on an experience she had in the parking lot of grocery store:

I was walking with my little cart and a white man looked 'crazy' at me. He turned back and kept looking to see what car I was going to get into, which I thought was weird... I have an [expensive SUV]. So we got into my car and I said to my friend, "You know he wasn't expecting that." ... [the White man] really thought I was going to get into that little ass car



next to us that was all broken down and stuff.” I think people have a perception of Latinas that, in little ways, I try to be like, “no, I’m a little more than that.”

In this example, she recognized that the *racialized gaze* was directed at her as racial other not as a Latina who is middleclass or even honorary white. Though she is medium skinned her racial self was coded with the negative stereotypes the dominant racist discourse inflicts upon Latinas/os everyday. Her deployment of the material elements required for a middleclass self, an expensive car, was an attempt to negate this racialization. In this context she experienced a racial self that was immediately othered in relation to the white gazer. The white person in this space clearly controlled who was allowed to gain access to white hierarchies as this Latina was subjected to ‘a crazy look’.

Tiffany a teacher from San Antonio, elaborates on how her class status should affect her experience, also noting how racial hierarchies are experienced through white gazes:

It’s my responsibility to show people that there are some of us that are not just in the service industry who are not coming to take your jobs. I am a college-educated Master’s professional who has worked hard for what I have... so I’m not just this random Mexican in the street that you feel you can look ‘crazy’ at.

In this instance we see that she recognizes the way racial hierarchies and processes of racialization impact Mexican Ancestry Latino/as. For this Latina her master’s degree is a narrative strategy that she believes should deflect dominant conceptualizations of

Latinas/os “on the street”. In her narration of who ‘she is’ she wields two different dominant narratives to sandwich her middleclass mitigation. This Latina’s wielding of the dominant narrative of “job theft,” a commonly used racist narrative about Latinas/os (Chavez 2008), initially provides distance for her to backfill with a “Master’s professional” mitigation strategy. She then uses the phrase “random Mexicans” to further cement her position as a not part of the collective black or ‘racial other’ on the racial hierarchy. Her narrative about herself illustrates who she is as much as it illustrates who she is not. Her master’s degree is racially coded White, a tool that she uses to deflect how her racial self is understood. Like the expensive SUV it worked to confound racist discourse about who these Latinas/os are, and enabled them room to narrate a self more congruent with their own understandings.

To be clear this is a direct reaction to racist assumptions about Latinas/os who live in the United States, assumptions that occur irrespective of where one is from or their citizenship status. Middleclass mitigation statements are a reaction based on pre-existing knowledge about racist discourse on Latinas/os. She knows what people think about “random Mexicans on the street” in San Antonio and she feels as though she should be considered in a different light. In some instances this narrative allowed for Latinas/os to access an honorary space in the racial hierarchy through the practice of middleclass backfilling (i.e. statements about jobs or degrees), yet there were other times when the effectiveness of deploying these middleclass backfills were unclear (the case of the Latina with an expensive SUV). Many middleclass Latinas/os felt that their middleclass status should mitigate racist stereotypes, tropes, and narratives however, this

was often an experience that was far more complex as many Latinas/os middleclass deployments had varying levels of mitigating effects.

### **Racial Hierarchies and Strategies of Deflection**

The strategies of identity not negotiation described above are not the only means for addressing the complexities of the racial hierarchy (Saenz and Murgia 2003, Sue 2009), however, they do provide fertile empirics for conceptualizing the shifts in these hierarchies. Because “identity not” is necessarily an identity of *lack* it exists in a referential state for the non-doer, with the primary points of reference are the racial hierarchies of the U.S. and the racial climates of Phoenix and San Antonio. Moreover the Mexican Ancestry Latino/as in this research are uniquely poised to navigate these hierarchies because of access gained from their participation in white coded middleclass practices (Feagin and Cobas 2008, Cobas and Feagin 2008, Flores 2011).

Identity deflection practices illustrate how these Latinas/os move through the varying contexts in which these hierarchies are manifest. These practices also show how these hierarchies are far more fluid than past sociological analyses have described (Feagin 2006, Bonilla-Silva 2004). This means, for example, Latinas/os may be acting in a binary racial hierarchy and deploy a specific identity not strategy; a deployment that may move them into a new space in the racial hierarchy perhaps into an “honorary white” position. However, this strategy may also be ineffective in providing movement in or out of the current context and they may stay in the binary as was exemplified with some who deployed oppositional strategies. Moreover, this fluidity and solidification of racial hierarchies can occur in different combinations for the same person. Troy Duster’s

(2001) discussion of the fluidity of whiteness brings us closer to reconceptualizing how Latinas/os experience racialization in the US. He illustrates how whiteness is fleeting, vaporizing after seemingly being a solid (2001). For middleclass Latinas/os this is the case for their experiences with the racial hierarchies of the U.S., as they move through different interactional spaces and different contexts, the resources of whiteness may be accessible or they may be fleeting or possibly accessed intermittently.

If we look back to the Latina whose friend was a lawyer who was assumed to be a landscaper his experience was one of a fluid hierarchy. He was in his everyday life, a upper-middleclass Latino gaining access to white resources (i.e. a white neighborhood) and at the same time a racialized other (via his interactions with his White neighbor). He is deploying specific middleclass (being a lawyer), and oppositional (yard maintenance) strategies, yet in different moments he experiences the hierarchy in two different ways: as a ternary racial hierarchy when he lives as an honorary white in the upper-middleclass neighborhood and as an othered Latina/o who despite his ownership of a home in this neighborhood is still viewed as an employee not a resident. To clarify, Latinos can in one moment be experiencing a ternary racial hierarchy, and in another interaction experience a binary racial hierarchy.

Access to white resources is not directly controlled by Latinas/os on the macro-interactional level however this chapter illustrates how it is impacted by Latinas/os deployment of various identity not distancing strategies on a micro-interactional level. In fact many Latinas/os feel that participation in these practices, is part and parcel of the means to gain access to the white coded middleclass resources. Specifically these

Latinas/os recognize that the racial hierarchy will at times, allow them access to the white coded middleclass resources via specific deployments of an identity not. This often occurred through a wielding strategy which also provides a means to move away from the “collective black” of the ternary or generalized racial other position in the binary. Ryan from Phoenix states:

When I went to grad school, I had a full ride. I was like, there is no shame in my game, I am going. If they’re going to pay for everything? And you need me to be the token Mexican? I will be that person...Yeah! All right! Hispanic? Awesome! That’s what I am! You know?

In this case tokenism was a wielding strategy that allowed this Latino into a largely White space of the university. This racialized tokenism (Flores 2011) is important because it illustrates aforementioned experiences of “playing the game” but also a recognition of the ability to gain access to white controlled resources, in this case graduate school. On the micro-interactional level Ryan is able to deploy a Hispanic self, one that historically attempts to deny racialization and instead focuses on a Spanish-European ethnic ancestry (Oboler 1995, Rodriguez 2000).

To be clear the deployment of this strategy was only at the behest of the parameters of the ternary racial hierarchy drawn up by the graduate school he was accepted to; a program that rarely accepts Mexicans but more readily accepts Hispanics as is evidenced by the racial identification on the Graduate school application. Ryan could have deployed an oppositional strategy, via writing in “Mexican” however his ability to access white controlled middleclass space of the university he had to wield the dominant

narrative of Hispanic: “Hispanic? Awesome! ” In this case he was accessing white resources via the deployment of an “identity not” strategy that explicitly moves him into the honorary white space. Similar to the aforementioned Latina who dressed more in the “White-Style” we see practices of identity aiding Latinas/os access to white controlled resources.

The “not doing” of these three strategies creates new space for Latinas/os to narrate their self yet, this only happens as individuals create an effective identity not. Often many Latinas/os who deploy oppositional or class mitigation strategies discover that the identity not is rarely something that “sticks.” Instead as we saw with the Latinas/os who worked as faculty or deployed class markers such as expensive cars didn’t always escape the binary racial hierarchy. These individuals, for example the Latina with a Ph.D. who said that some people think she is there to clean the floors in the university, often are placed in a white/other racial hierarchy. This Latina in particular wears professional clothing to her job, has a badge to access various restricted university buildings, yet still experiences immediate racial othering as she encounters people at her work. The strategies of deploying her middleclass identity not and other distancing strategies didn’t help her.

Once again Ysenia provides insight as she experienced similar encounters at work:

When you look across the board at all minorities, we’re all pretty much in the same boat when it comes to the racial hierarchy... the bottom-line is that all minorities are going to be looked down upon by the white

person...Its whites that are the one's that are gonna say "Oh yeah, look at that landscaper over there"

For this Latina/o she believes that the dichotomy of White and Other is the dominant racial hierarchy. While her experiences are common they can be attributed to the ways in which the racial hierarchy is more 'solid' for Latinas/os. This is because not doing may be effective or it may be ineffective which complicates Bonilla-Silva's theorizations of a "buffering" or what he argues is the "derailing" of the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomizing that occurs in the U.S. (2006:196). All Latinas/os, irrespective of their skin tone, still must contend with the dichotomies of the U.S. racial hierarchy as they encounter Whites in their everyday lives.

I argue that these deflection practices impact how Latina/o identities and selves are located in the shifting racial hierarchies of the United States. They often found room to deploy at least one of the three strategies mentioned above if not several. These strategies directly impact the racial structure in new ways as we see that negotiation of the hierarchies is possible. This is significant as these hierarchies are often discussed as monolithically experienced by Latinas/os and other groups of color.

## **Conclusion**

The racist discourse experienced by Latinas/os has significant effects for their everyday lives. As they go shopping, to work and to school they experience the push and pull of binary/ternary racial hierarchies, which has a significant impact on how they talk about and negotiate their racial identities. The deployment of these strategies is dependent upon the appropriateness of the racial context, namely if their racial selves are

understood under a “fluid” or a “solid” racial hierarchy. Sue’s (2009) discussion of Bonilla Silva’s Latin Americanization Thesis (ternary) illustrates, “Our focus should not only be on the structure of the hierarchy but also the degree and strength of particular racial boundaries.” This underscores how the Latina/o experience isn’t monolithic but that Latinas/os experience their self in myriad of positions on these hierarchies because of varying strengths of racial boundaries in different contexts. Having a dynamic “tool kit” (Swidler 1986) with which to deploy in this ever changing racial hierarchies is an everyday necessity. This article has outlined three common strategies present in middleclass Latinas/os “tool kits” of identity negotiation.

Moreover, while it is true that these strategies can be instrumental for negotiating white racism by granting momentary or limited access to the “honorary White” or “White” status in the racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva 2006), they also have a significant side effect. During the process(es) of discursively negotiating this racial hierarchy and racist discourse, these strategies distance middleclass Latinas/os from other Latinas/os. Process (es) that reify divisions along color and class lines among Latinas/os, divisions these strategies are attempting to counteract. This consequence illustrates the inescapability of the American racial hierarchies, as Latinas/os attempt to “move beyond” or away from racial oppression they ultimately reinscribe it. This is significant for post-racial policy aimed at aiding access to a middleclass lifestyle for Latinas/os as we must find new ways to negotiate these hierarchies that don’t reinvent them as these post-racial colorblind arguments most certainly do.



Additionally, though I rely heavily on Cobas and Feagin, I argue that these distancing strategies not internalized white framings (Cobas and Feagin 2008, Feagin 2010) and are instead practices of deflection indicative of forms of identity navigation. Under the strategies of distancing of middleclass Latinas/os from discourse on working class, poor and/or immigrants, is more often about “playing the game” to gain access to varying latitudes of power, privilege, and resources made readily available to a White Middleclass. We see that there is a Duboisian “double consciousness” occurring for middleclass Latinas/os; an awareness of oppression with a willingness to survive. This is a far cry from agreeing with white narratives about Latinas/os, and instead should be understood as a narrative of “survivance”(Powell 2002, Vizenor 2008) as they deflect life changing processes of racialization.

Moreover, in their navigation of the oscillating racial hierarchy we see that these Latinas/os are often required to align with Whiteness or White coded practices. These alignments with whiteness are acts of survivance that provide Latinas/os the access to naming their self rather than being named or worse erased. As Vizenor explains, “...survivance is an active sense of presence over absence” (2008:1). Latinas/os gain access to the latitudes of power by participating in the white coded middleclass; power that, depending on the context of the racial hierarchy, may allow these Latinas/os to be a presence. To understand their negotiations as nuanced acts of survivance requires more than merely seeing a binary or ternary but rather simultaneously seeing a fluid and solid racial hierarchy.

The latitudes of power and privilege are not illustrated in Cobas and Feagin's analyses of the experiences of the middleclass and provides very little in the way of accounting for how race and class are working in simultaneity for Latinas/os. While they point out that many Latinas/os are negotiating a "predominantly white space" (Cobas and Feagin 2008, Feagin and Cobas 2008), their analyses neglect that these are also spaces that are also predominantly middleclass. This means that Cobas and Feagin's analytics, while extremely useful for conceptualizing how whiteness impacts middleclass Latinas/os, do not detail the ways in which privilege shifts for this portion of the middleclass. To be clear this is not the resurgence of an argument about the declination of race (Wilson 1978 also see Feagin 1991) but rather I illustrate a need to contextualize how race and class interact and intersect. Latinas/os in this research, with varying degrees, access a White coded class privilege that impacts how they experience racial hierarchies in the United States.

Middleclass Latinas/os negotiations of the self are significantly impacted by the racist discourse on Latinas/os living in the US. This chapter builds on this rich literature by illustrating the processes by which Latinas/os negotiate these discourse. Processes of racialization occur for these Latinas/os as both structural and agentic as they navigate fluid and solid racial hierarchies. Understanding these racial hierarchies as processes that change with the meanings of racial categories is necessary for understanding the experiences of racialized groups such as Latinas/os. As Latinas/os continue to be the largest racial group in the US their experiences have become essential in shaping and changing our complex processes of racialization.

In the next chapter I detail exactly what these Latino/a people are deflecting and negotiating. In short the following chapter provides a clear understanding of the racist structures, discourse, and contexts imposed on middleclass Latinos/as that necessitate these strategies of negotiation. I provide this as the last analytic chapter to underscore my argument that though negotiation is possible the permanence and depth of oppression are long lasting, therefore explicating the details of this oppression are in some ways far more necessary at the moment than understanding the fleeting negotiations and points of access to whiteness.

## CHAPTER VI

### “MEXICANS DON’T GO WHALE WATCHING!:" WHITE OPPRESSION AND IDENTITY IMPOSITION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is focused on the way in which the Mexican ancestry Latinos experience their racial identities. Specifically I focus on how middleclass Mexican Americans experience race and processes of racialization. This means that while class is a factor that impacts racial identities for these Latinos it does not supersede, mitigate, or erase racial inequality (Feagin 2001). I only argue that it is a variable that can impact how race is experienced. Some of the respondents in this research experience processes of racialization through simultaneously classed and raced lenses—often the class inequality arises from racist assumptions about Latinos such as when respondents are mistaken for maids or custodial staff because of their skin tone instead of for the doctors or lawyers that they actually are (Romero 2002, Agius Vallejo 2012, Feagin and Cobas forthcoming).

Additionally this chapter fills the gap in literature on how Latino/a identities are formed through the imposing of racial scripts and hierarchies. This means that this chapter focuses on how these Mexican Americans think about their self in relation to larger racial climates that purport that they are venal criminals, immigrants, and generally problematic (Chapters IV and V). What follows is a combination of experiences had by middleclass Mexican Americans as well as their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about who they are. This chapter is tied together by ideas of whites imposing

of racist identities on Mexican Americans (Feagin and Cobas forthcoming, Macias 2006) and because racial hierarchies are white controlled and created they also impact how racial identities are formed. I focus on three examples from the interview narratives of middleclass Mexican Americans where they highlight how their racial identities are imposed, resisted, and reappropriated.

Each of these examples provides an understanding how middleclass Mexican Americans experience their racial self and each provides an understanding of the major tenants of the white oppression they encounter everyday. Namely we see that processes of white oppression constrict and constrain the middleclass, they deny them access to white coded resources in the middleclass (such as citizenship and education), and they require these individuals to be hyper-vigilant and aware of how race will impact their identity. As their racial identities are imposed upon them, they are forced to choose how to negotiate (Stryker and Burke 2000) – resist, deflect, or acquiesce (see Chapter II and V). In what follows I provide three examples of the white imposition of identities through an examination of these respondents narratives on citizenship, Chicano/a identity and Whiteness. Each of these examples represents ways Latino/a people respond to the white imposition of racial selves on Latinas/os.

Feagin and Cobas (forthcoming) argue that, “group and individual racial identities involve both externally imposed identities and sometimes conflicting self-chosen identities.” This is the case for middleclass Mexican Americans where they are forced into a tightrope act vying for a space to exist all the while knowing whites and white supremacy are pushing against them. Suzanne, a social worker, from San Antonio

illustrates this tight rope act in my conversation with her about her vacation to the Pacific Northwest,

Suzanne: We took a vacation to Seattle and we went whale watching.

And I told people we were going whale watching, and they were like

“Mexicans don’t go whale watching.” This Mexican is, going!

Daniel: Mexicans don’t go whale watching?

Suzanne: Yeah, that’s what I was told.

Even the most mundane middleclass experiences such as vacation are constrained and impacted by processes of racialization. Suzanne and her family wanted to participate in the white coded middleclass activity of whale watching yet, she was told that Mexican ancestry people don’t go whale watching. This statement is one example of how the middleclass is denied access to white coded middleclass identity resources. While it seems Suzanne still accessed them, this did not occur without some contestation on her own part. This contestation is built into the experiences of many middleclass Mexican Americans wherein they regularly have to “fight” to gain access to the white middleclass. This “fight” or negotiation was common as identities that were incongruous with their Meadian “I” were regularly mapped onto their subject locations by whites and white supremacy.

### **Dominant Arguments about Middleclass Mexican American Identities**

Very little research has focused explicitly on how racial identities are imposed and negotiated for people of color and especially for middleclass Mexican Americans. Thomas Macias (2006) and Jody Agius Vallejo (2012) both address racial identities in

their respective books on the Middleclass Mexican Americans. As I previously noted in Chapter III neither of these authors are focused on race or racial oppression instead each is focused on ethnicity and ethnic inequality and consequently their arguments neglect the structural constraint of these imposed identities. Moreover their focus on ethnicity is largely due to their studies being rooted in assimilation models for understanding and thinking about Latino/as (See Feagin and Cobas forthcoming for a critique).

Though these scholars such as Macias recognize that Mexican Americans must face ascribed identities they nonetheless are persistent in their characterization of these assigned identities as “errors” on part of the assigner (usually a white friend, colleague or coworker is mistaken not necessarily racist) (Macias 2006:106)—herein lies the problem, scholars such as Macias white wash racial oppression (also see Davila 2008 for a critique of this white washing) and characterize the impositions of identity as errors. I argue that imposed identity assignments represent the primary means through which whites are able to maintain a racial hierarchy (and social distances and control). More than errors or stereotypes these represent discursive and ideological means for the implementation of racial oppression (Matsuda 1993). Moreover I contend that this manifestation of oppression acts as a form of social control exacted on Mexican American middleclass to deny them access to white controlled/coded middleclass resources.

Agius Vallejo (2012) builds on assimilation models much like Macias, and does account for oppression or in her words “stereotypes”. She states the following in her discussion of those respondents that grew up middleclass, “Nearly all [interviewees]

recounted occasions where they have been subjected to ethnic, gender or immigrant stereotypes” (2012:126). Agius Vallejo’s arguments still rely on discursively disguising racial oppression as encounters with ethnic stereotypes. She continues by stating, “Ethnic boundaries are often rigid upon initial contact with whites, usually because of surname or skin color, *but they relax once established* [emphasis added]” (2012:126). Like Macias she provides a relaxed critique of racial oppression and the whites who perpetrate this oppression. Moreover, one can only assume that this is a reality for her respondents as no evidence is provided to support her statements that the relaxation of oppression upon the establishment of social relationships is actually occurring. Agius Vallejo goes on to state, “Further evidence that boundaries between whites and Mexican Americans are flexible is that some later generation Mexican Americans identify ethnically as American and have disappeared into the white racial category altogether as the linear assimilation model anticipates” (2012:140). My research shows that strict enforcement of racial boundaries is a more common, recurring and everyday experience for middleclass Mexican Americans than Agius Vallejo argues. Additionally very few of my respondents are able to fully access whiteness and ‘disappear’ into the white racial category<sup>27</sup>.

More often my respondents were given access to white middleclass resources only to have this access denied the very next day, week, or month. In Chapter V I had a quote from one interviewee, Ysenia, who’s friend was a Latino lawyer, who was

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<sup>27</sup> I am hesitant to say none, as one of my respondents was multiracial (white and Latina). Her experience were much more in line with the assimilationist arguments, however, I want to stress that she was phenotypically, socially and culturally part of whiteness because of her white parent (mother). All my other respondents were not part of whiteness in the same way as this respondent.



racialized in his own front yard, as his white neighbor assumed he was a landscaper. In Ysenia's statement we see that this Latino who was once admitted to the white controlled middleclass (his neighborhood) he was again racialized as the poor immigrant criminal Mexican. Later in that interview Ysenia revealed that her friend's white neighbor continued to view her friend with suspicion long after living next to him. In fact we see that many Latino/a people are always viewed with suspicion especially in racial climates such as San Antonio and Phoenix where the normative discourse portrays Latino/a as criminal immigrant before lawyer, doctor, or professor.

This chapter highlights these experiences with white neighbors, coworkers, friends and institutions. It underscores how these Latinos narrate their racial selves outside and inside these conversations. In doing this I provide a means for thinking about how the middleclass must negotiate the imposed identities of whites who are present in their everyday lives.

### **The Racist Imposition of a Non-Citizen Identity**

Because the process of imposition of racial identity is directly related to citizenship we often see that the racial selves of Latinos/as is directly shaped by an assumed non-citizen status irrespective of their actual "documented" citizenship. As I have discussed in Chapter II scholars have noted all Latinos are suspected of being immigrant non-citizens largely due to their racial phenotype. This intersection of racial selves and citizenship is crucial for all people of color and for Mexican ancestry Latino/a people it plays an especially important role in how we experience racism in the national discourse (Santa Ana 2003) and local discourse (Chapter IV).

Latinas/os are always conceptualized as the perpetual foreigner (Inda 2000) and in these spaces there are dominant narratives that maintain a Latino/a other (See Chapter IV on racial climates). These narratives often convey a national American identity that doesn't include Latinos/as because of racial phenotype (Torres, Miron, and Inda 1999, Carter 2007). This exclusion was often experienced by middleclass Latinos in this research through the implementation of specific narratives comparing whites and Latinos, some of which I illustrated in the Sheriff's office press releases and in the historical account of the Alamo. Specifically I showed that the discourse in San Antonio and Phoenix illustrate Latinos/as as invaders of the cities spaces because their racial phenotype immediately codes them as immigrant. These narratives also have an impact on Latino/a people's own conceptualizations of their citizenship as they are forced to realize that American is coded white. In fact many of the respondents in this research indicated that this was the case. Sandra a graduate student and U.S. born citizen illustrates the sentiments of many Mexican Americans when she states the following:

Daniel: So do you think that American citizenship becomes synonymous with Whiteness?

Sandra: Yes.

Daniel: Why do you think that happens?

Sandra: 'Cause I think that's the way society is. I mean the majority of commercials have White people on them. Maybe there's a little bit of change, but growing up it was White. There are no Mexicans, you know.

Daniel: Occasionally a Black person or an Asian person now?

Sandra: Right! And more so now, but I think the typical image of what an American is, you know, is not a Mexican-American.

For Sandra the interconnectedness of white racial identity and citizenship were an everyday reality. Her statements of “that’s the way society is” illustrate that she recognized that this went beyond merely a singular experience with racism or one racist person or even a few members of a hate group. Sandra recognized that this white imposed identity is systemic and on the societal level. Her citing of television as an indicator of who belongs underscores this and points to how race and representation indicate who belongs and who is excluded. Many social scientists have made similar arguments about representation and belonging with regard to Latinos/as and the media (Davila 2001). While Sandra is well educated she is not a social scientist her knowledge comes from an everyday experience of imposition of boundaries around racial identities by whites (Lamont 2000a) faced by many Mexican Americans. This everyday knowledge about the exclusion of Latinos/as was manifest in my discussion of Arpaio’s statements about closing off the space of Maricopa county from the invasion of drugs and immigrants. Exclusion of Latino/a immigrants in the space of Maricopa county, as many respondents realized also meant the exclusion of all Latinos/as from the space.

In addition to recognizing that this inequality surrounding citizenship impacts Latino/a people she also recognizes that it significantly benefits whites. She points out that this leads to an automatic assumption that whites constitute the body of the nation. This means that if the body of the nation is white then Mexican Americans of all classes are at best, the racial other and at worst parasitic invaders of this national body (Inda

2000, Santa Ana 2002). This lingering specter a white citizen constituting the national body is important for how Latino/a people fit into the national body. Again this was implicitly reflected in Arpaio's colorblind tactics as well as in the Alamo narratives of virtuous whites. The narratives present in the climates these Latinos/as encounter everyday have a significant impact for how they experience the possibilities of their racial identities and citizenship.

I asked another respondent, Suzanne, the following questions about her own identity in relation to her citizenship. She describes her experience as follows:

Daniel: Do you feel American all the time?

Suzanne: Yes.

Daniel: Do you feel that you're always seen as American?

Suzanne: No.

Daniel: Okay. Do you think that you'd ever be mistaken for someone who's not a citizen?

Suzanne: Yes.

Daniel: Have you ever been mistaken for a non-citizen?

Suzanne: Well I think too that's why people ask me "what are you?" If I didn't speak English, obviously that would be one indicator. But when they hear me speak, then they kind of know I am a citizen. But I think just based on the color of my skin, I'm not dark complected but I'm fair skinned...or brown—they would naturally assume that I'm not American.

Suzanne's response, echoing Sandra's, illustrates the two primary elements for thinking about racial identities and citizenship—the I and the Me. She illustrates both how she understand her citizen self however also recognizes that she is not always perceived as a citizen because of her skin tone. This distinction is important because it represents the conflicting experience had by many middleclass Mexican Americans as they experience upward mobility they hear the discourse about what it means to be successful in America, and to live the American dream. However, as Suzanne illustrates there is a certain amount of incongruence with how they feel and how they are perceived. Suzanne's brown complexion immediately makes her an illegal immigrant and neither her class status nor the fact that she's 2<sup>nd</sup> plus generation Mexican American can negate the conflation of whiteness with American citizenship.

This lead many respondents to recognize that whites were always considered citizens and that as Mexican Americans they would always be suspected of being undocumented. Ronnie a college student, echoes Suzanne and Sandra and gave me the following responses to my questions about citizenship and race:

Daniel: When you think about an American, do you think about a Black person? Or would you think of a White European?

Ronnie: Kind of a White European, yeah.

Daniel: Would you think of someone who maybe is Mexican or looks like you as an American?

Ronnie: Not yet, but we're getting there. We have Obama, you know. It used to be only a strong, White male you know...or Uncle Sam you

know. They talk about indirect discrimination in job applications and say an all American rather than say a White person. So I mean secretly, yes it's an all-White kind of thing.

On their face Ronnie's responses indicate that he understands the racial hierarchy but he seems a bit reluctant to admit that there is an overarching system of oppression as Sandra and Suzanne illustrated. Instead he argues that there is change on the horizon and notes our current president as an example of racial progress. However, looking a little closer what Ronnie is really arguing is that its not that whiteness and citizenship are not tied together for him. Rather he is arguing that it is no longer an overt system of oppression such as Jim crow. Instead, he states that its now "secretly" only for whites implying that he believes this racism is no longer on the front stage. Ronnie illustrates what Houts Picca and Feagin (2007) argue is a backstage racism. Wherein the racism of yore is now confined to a back stage occupied largely by whites. His statements indicate the feelings of ambivalence of many respondents as they are reluctant to admit that their access to citizenship is constrained by racism and largely available only to whites yet, they also desire to be part of this national body.

More often the respondents were very aware that whites were given automatic access to citizenship and recognized that rarely was their racial identity a factor. In fact many of the respondents argued that whites and whiteness are what is normatively considered a citizen. Rebecca, a supervisor at an investment firm, illustrates this point when I ask her about her if she is always seen as an American and automatically reply's in terms of a racialized citizenship. "No. No, I mean looking at my skin tone and you

know you can tell that I'm not White. I...I look Hispanic." She immediately understands American to mean whiteness (see Agius Vallejo 2012) and highlights that she is the racial non-citizen other.

She continues as I ask her if she thinks whites are ever mistaken for non-citizens, she says:

No. I think people that look Anglo—like Germans or Canadians—they automatically, are Americans, because of the way they look, Americans look White. Americans look like Anglos. But that's number one...if you look White, you're American.

Respondents in this research understood that their racial identities were tied to the discourse and practices of citizenship. Ronnie, Rebecca, Sandra and Suzanne illustrated this, as they realized they might be caught up in narratives about immigrant Latinos because of their skin color and other phenotypical characteristics. They also recognized that citizenship was central to accessing the middleclasses and many of these respondents and their family members struggled very hard to access this resource. But there is a distinction made by many of the respondents that citizenship is not merely about proof of documentation, but more about racially looking the part.

None of my respondents felt as though they racially looked the part and felt that they were always, at least, potential suspects when it comes to issues about proof of citizenship. The racial climates in which their racial identities are imposed on them shaped how they think about their racial selves and their citizenship. Many felt American yet, rarely thought they were perceived as such. This discrepancy in knowing

they are American and not feeling accepted as such, was for many respondents centered solely on race and their racial identities. Often this perception/assumption of whites constituting the national citizenry pervades even their own perceptions; Suzanne admits the following after affirmatively answering that whites rarely get mistaken for non-citizens:

Daniel: Why do whites not get mistaken for being non-citizens?

Suzanne: Because they're White...their skin's...based on their skin color, I think that even if you were from like Germany, if I would just see you, I would be like okay...But if you would talk and you had like a heavy German accent, you know I'd be like oh she's not from here. But I would assume that you were an American citizen.

This is how racial oppression works as it convinces even those who are on the oppression receiving end of the spectrum to make assumptions that are congruent with this oppression. Suzanne argues that encountering a white person with a German accent would only mean they weren't from Phoenix but she wouldn't mistake them as a non-citizen because of their whiteness. We see that even these Latino/a people are subject to the impact of racist framing (Feagin 2010) as they too assume that citizenship is synonymous with whiteness. To negotiate these racist framings these Mexican Americans often use the strategies of deflection and negotiation discussed in Chapter V to obfuscate these assumptions when they are directed at them specifically. However as Feagin and Cobas (forthcoming) note that sometimes these identities are conflicting and in Suzanne's statements we see that she too gets caught up thinking that a white German



person is a citizen even with an accent. She illustrates the depths of the impact of systemic and structural racism and how it effects Latinos/as own thinking about their racial selves. Proving the racial self that these Middleclass Latinos/as convey is one where whiteness has pervaded, colonized, and occupied their methods and means for practicing their citizen self (Murguia 1975, de la Luz Montes 2002)

This racial occupation of their own practices has shaped their ability to see their selves as citizens and part of the national body. Even in his optimism Ronnie, admits that he can't see someone like himself normatively considered a citizen. This illustrates the depths of the imposition of racial identities on Latinos/as as their self conceptualizations are confined to the ways in which whites and white supremacy have shaped them. Though they seem to try and discursively negotiate the space, as Ronnie says "Not yet" implying that recognition of him as a normative citizen will soon be possible, as I stated previously, the effectiveness of these negotiations are unclear as the pervasiveness of white supremacy has a significant impact on these respondents conceptualizations of their racial identities. One of my respondents, Rudy a community organizer and teacher, put it best as we were driving through the Arizona desert to Tucson for a meeting with his civil rights organization, he said to me, "This is our land [meaning Arizona and the southwest generally] how can we be immigrants in our own land?" Rudy's simple yet profound question made me realize that these identities are imposed upon us and that we can practice them but only within certain parameters. Like the border itself, one major parameter we are never to cross, based on our racial phenotype, is that of citizenship. Rudy's statements were not naïve to this, and none of my respondents were either

though many didn't want that reality to be the only one possible and held optimism similar to Ronnie's<sup>28</sup>. To answer Rudy, Latino/a people are immigrants, not because we don't have documentation of our citizenship but because we are not considered white by the whites who determine citizenship.

Citizenship is one aspect of Latino/a racial identities that cues up ideas of who belongs and who doesn't and its an element that often for these Latinos makes their skin tone and other racial characteristics salient. This high salience makes them reflective about how their own racial identities shape their access to citizenship in the United States. In the section that follows I build on this discussion for thinking about how Middleclass Mexican American's identities are imposed upon them, as they must be nimble in their identity deployments.

### **Complexities of Being Chicano/a**

The racial climates that many of these Mexican Americans live in have a significant impact on their racial identities. Many of them felt as though their racial selves were far more complex than the racial climates they lived in would allow them to be. Scholars such as Anzaldúa (1999) have noted that this is a common experience for many Mexican Americans as we come from many places and our selves are manifest on/in/from the bordered interstitial spaces. I agree with these arguments, and argue that despite our racial history—born of Spanish conquest and colonialism—we are now a racialized group distinct from European whites and in particular the Spanish people that

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<sup>28</sup> Also as I noted in the Chapter V many didn't just take these impositions, they attempted to deflect and negotiate this oppression.

in many ways spurred our birth (Anzaldua 1999, Stannard 1993, Cobas, Duany and Feagin 2008)

Unfortunately these arguments (Anzaldua 1999) about our interstitial/bordered existence while useful ignore and/or fail to address the identity of Chicano/a. In what follows I focus on my requests for middleclass Mexican Americans to talk to me about specific racial identity categories, and while they talked about many different identities, the central focus will be on the category of Chicano/a. I focus on this racial identity because it has been argued (Acuna 2007, Navarro 2005, Hurtado and Gurin 2004) that a Chicano/a identity is an identity that was created by Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as in reaction to white oppression. It arose from social movements that began in the early 1950s by scholars, activists, and artists, and it culminated in the civil rights movement with the formation of a Chicano/a movement (Acuna 2007). However this racial self fell to the way side as many of these activists began to access the middleclasses and the Regan era neo-conservatives vilified Chicano/a as a racial identity in the 1980s and as the movement and its leaders became older (Navarro 2005, Bedolla 2009). This section is focused on this racial identity as it is one of the only Mexican ancestry racial identities that was created by and for this group. Arguably it seems logical that it would hold significant sway with the individuals in this research as a racial identity. To be clear, I am not arguing for one singular identity that addresses or highlights who we are, instead I'm accounting for the complexities of racial identities and recognizing that these racial identities are tied to racial oppression and white supremacy—even (and especially) for middleclass Mexican Americans. Ultimately I recognize that the ways in which these

respondents narrate and negotiate a Chicano identity is an example of how this white supremacy impacts and imposes who we are.

One of the most contested identities for these middleclass Latino/a people is that of a Chicano/a. Acuna's (2007) arguments about the changes in the Chicano/a community as we moved into positions of power and presumably into the middleclass post-civil rights, ring true with some of the respondents in this research. He notes the following on the movement of Chicanos into the middleclass,

The good part was that it gave Chicanos more of a voice in government and society. The bad part was that middle-class Chicanos often developed social and economic interests differing from those of the working class and they were co-opted by the mainstream becoming agents,' intermediary gatekeepers, power brokers, or influence peddlers between the Chicano community and the ruling class" (2007:286).

While Acuna's pessimism is insightful he never addressed that many of these individuals do not see themselves as part of the Chicano/a identity (also see Montejano's 2011 elision of this as a current factor impacting this identity). In fact many of the respondents distanced their selves from this identity and its political and historical underpinnings. This worked in conjunction with their identity not practices but this identity distancing was also tied to their lack of knowledge about the ontology of this identity. Often those who didn't understand this identity associated it with crime, or strictly a working class identity, or gangsterism while others believed it to be antiquated and no longer relevant.

I argue that this lack of knowledge about the Chicano/a movement and

consequently Chicana/o identities represents what one respondent, Rudy described at the beginning of Chapter I as white mis-education. Feagin and Cobas (2008) point out in their article that the middleclass is subject to mainly white controlled institutions, institutions that are cutting Chicano/a studies, Latino/a studies and other elements of racial and ethnic studies in k-12 curriculum. This translates to Latino/a people who are denied knowledge about their own racial histories, and consequently do only hear mainstream discourse about their possible racial selves; either their Hispanic or a Cholo/a and/or of the working/poor class.

Some respondents knew a little more about the identities and didn't associate it with gangsters or Cholo/a identities. Elsa, a real estate broker in San Antonio, echoed the assumptions about Chicana identities being largely for poor or working classes, and she equates it with migrant workers in particular. She states,

Chicana always seemed to me...like farmers. Like migrant workers almost you know. I was very young when that whole movement was going on, civil rights for migrant workers, and I remember them calling themselves Chicano, so I never related to that.

Elsa equates a Chicana identity as one that is restricted to those that are doing migrant work and also feels as though it is a temporally locked identity, one located during the 1960s and 1970s or civil rights era. Or as another respondent Luis a graphic artist, describes it as "an anachronism for a political movement that ended a while back." Chicano/a is no longer a relevant racial identity for many Latino/a people. While they recognized and admitted to experiencing racism many felt that their civil rights era is

over and didn't connect these experiences with current racial inequality they experienced.

Moreover, Elsa like many of the respondents in this research argues that a Chicana identity is bound up in class status. She is not a migrant worker or “farmer” she cannot possibly be a Chicana. Elsa's statements draw boundaries on class and generation lines, and only indirectly on racial lines. She doesn't argue that she is not of the same ancestry as Chicano/a people but rather that she doesn't farm and didn't fight for migrant workers civil rights—she doesn't relate to it as a class identity. But because class is always racialized, migrant framers always connotes immigrant or working class Latinos/as, we rarely see white migrant farmers. This is a strategy that moves her away from classed interpretations of race that would move her to the bottom of the racial hierarchy. However, like all racial identity practices these are structured by the whiteness as Elsa doesn't want to be subject to these lower rungs of the racial hierarchy.

Rebecca also doesn't see her self as a Chicana and instead, like Elsa, equates it with a working class and/or criminalized (Chola) racial identity. However, she also believes this identity to generally have negative connotations surrounding it. She states,

Rebecca: Hmm. I don't identify as Chicana only because it's kind of derogatory for some people. And I don't know if that's right or wrong, but I guess I've always kind of thought Chicana is kind of like a “ruca”, like “raza”. You know what I mean?

Daniel: Like a Chola?

Rebecca: Yeah. I'm not that.

Rebecca is trying to highlight her distance from the negative class and crime coded racializations present in Chicano/a identity. Historically and presently the Chicano movement embraced various cultural elements of this identity, such as Cholo/a, and notions of La Raza, and even one element of this identity that white discourse about Latinos/as imposes on this identity, gangsterism. However, in our conversation Rebecca doesn't quite know how she wants to identify racially however, she is clear that she doesn't want to be associated with the discourse of the working class Chicano/a movement. For Rebecca it's a "derogatory" identity. This is again a distancing and deflection technique that many Latinos use to create discursive space between their racial selves and identities that whites find problematic and/or part of the lower rungs of the racial hierarchies.

However, I also think this distancing represents the contextuality of the type of the Chicano/a identity. The narratives these Latino/a people give me will represent their racial selves in the space of the interview recording where they won't be able to later "defend" or clarify their responses. They are acutely aware of this fact of the interview process and Mexican Americans, like Elsa and Rebecca, are aware of how Chicano/a might be seen, how whites will impose a working class, gangster or generally a racial other label on this identity.

Yet despite this deflection, not all of my respondents avoided this identity completely and instead of dismissing Chicano/a as an identity other Mexican Americans narratively construct a self that carefully walked the line between Chicano/a, Hispanic, and Latino. One interviewee, a professor named Ricardo, conveyed this balancing act

when he identified as Chicano/a and recognizes how it can be easily misunderstood and racialized in a problematic way by his audience.

I would use the Chicano identity in a very affirmative way to affirm something that's being denied. It's always situational as you know, it depends on who asks. If I don't know my interviewer...the answer depends on how I'm feeling and my questioner. If I don't want to deal with it, I'll say I'm Hispanic and if the person is not really interested and just wants to focus on it, that's going to be it.

He illustrates how some in the middleclass view this identity as something that is to be deployed or used when the time is right or appropriate. For some middleclass Mexican Americans this identity is not used as a main identity that they will deploy in any context and as Ricardo illustrates that identity space is reserved for Hispanic. As I've mentioned previously the Hispanic identity conveys an assimilated Latino/a who associates their racial self with whiteness but more importantly this identity is a white created racial identity that discursively ties Latinos to whiteness. Moreover, this represents the larger trends among the Latino population to adapt to the racial climates of the moment.

Armando Navarro (2005) notes that the origins and rise of the Hispanic generation occurred post-civil rights during the neo-conservative Regan regime of the 1980s. During this time Navarro highlights the following regarding Mexican American politics "The emphasis was no longer on direct action protest politics, but instead on a mainstream type of politics based on a resurgent mode of accommodation, adaptation, and integration" (2005:473). It can be surmised from Navarro's arguments that this



impacted how the deployment of Hispanic as a racial identity should be understood for Mexican Americans in this research as it is accommodational, and ultimately is often deployed by those who in the moment “want [I would add ‘need’] to be whites” (Navarro 2005:473).

But I argue that this is a bit simplistic in addition to difficult to prove, because it is often very difficult to prove motivation in a pure sense (Vaisey 2009 also see Swidler 2003)<sup>29</sup> Instead I argue that while I agree with Navarro’s assessment and on its face it seems true these Mexican American’s don’t want to be Chicano/a—they would rather be white or as Ricardo puts it “they just don’t want to deal with it.” Yet, if we look closer at Ricardo’s statements and contextualize these statements in my arguments from chapters IV and V we can see that these actions should be thought about as part of negotiation techniques. What Ricardo is really saying is not that he “isn’t Chicano” but rather that he doesn’t want to always be seen as such especially when Whites control this identity. “It depends on who asks” he says. If whites are controlling the space the likelihood that Latino/a people will deploy a resistance type identity, such as Chicano/a is lower as they recognize that it carries with it a high race and class price tag (see Rebecca’s statements above). Identifying as Chicano/a means that the individual must be ready to be excluded from middleclass resources. If they are willing to acquiesce and admit to Hispanic as their racial self, like Ricardo, then they are able to not have to “deal with it” or not have to fight to have a space on the higher rungs of the racial hierarchy.

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<sup>29</sup> I consider materiality useful here but in this case it doesn’t always imply or explain motivation. Material inequality can be one means that we explain why the middleclass may desire proximity to whiteness but this is again at best circumstantial not definitive.

However, there were some Mexican Americans who embraced this identity and they claimed that it was a primary identity for them. Though they were few, they did express a commitment to this racial identity as one of their main racial selves. Rudy illustrates how many of those who embraced a Chicano racial self after I questioned him about using Mexican American as a racial identity. He says,

I'll accept it. Or I'll answer to it, but...I like the little stronger blend of Chicano. Because you can be Mexican-American, but Chicano indicates more of a political identity. Something a little bit more deliberate about your ethnicity than Mexican-American. You know Mexican-American's sort of you can be born into it. But Chicano, you become Chicano, right. And that subtle distinction...I enjoy it.

Rudy's commitment to this racial identity is largely because of its political connotation and according to Rudy its achieved rather than the ascribed status of Mexican American. Rudy's perception or interpretation of the Chicano/a identity differs significantly from Rebecca and Elsa's and in many ways falls more in line with Ricardo's. Elsa and Rebecca argue for distance from the perceived self or imposed self, while Ricardo and Rudy argue that when they embrace the term they use it based on their own conceptualization of who they are or the "I" in the Meadian binary. Moreover, Rudy's statements highlight how a Chicano/a racial self is one that is "done" or accomplished and not necessarily imposed—in many ways, for Rudy, it's an achieved racial identity. While, as I mentioned above, desire is difficult to measure, these individuals conceptualize Chicano/a in a myriad of different ways some think of Chicano as a

problematic identity, others view it as a very desirable striving to achieve it while still others use it as it is necessary arguing that there is a time and a place for a Chicano racial self. This discrepancy in the deployment, understanding, and general feeling of Chicano/a as a racial identity highlights how racial identities are contextual in their imposition. While the racial climates rarely change significantly Latino/a people deploy a racial self, such as Chicano/a well aware of the consequences of exclusion or negotiations that will arise because of this identity.

Rudy and Ricardo use these identities yet, they were both aware of how these identities are imposed and recoded by whites. Rudy argues against the gangster or Cholo/a coding for Chicano and is visibly upset in our interview as he says the following,

Well that's sort of an insult. So now you're saying that for me to assert my Mexican identity means I'm in a gang automatically? Because that's the only way we are manifest?

And a few seconds later he, rhetorically, asks,

Yeah, okay...then what is Hispanic associated with then?

Rudy's statements illustrates that Chicano/a identities are continually subject to white coding and recoding irrespective of our own interpretations. His retort about "Hispanic" identity indicates his recognition that whites control our racial identities and is really sarcastically saying 'I guess we all need to become closer to whiteness.' Moreover Rudy's statements illustrate the complexities of Chicano/a racial identities and how they

are despite our own interpretations and intentions are always subject to white oppression, whites gazes, and white control.

The degree of their proximity to a white hostility often determines the extent to which the middleclass will deploy Chicano/a identity for fear of material sanctions or being rebuked. This is important for thinking about how Latino/a people identify their racial selves as they negotiate who they are and as they contend with white impositions of the self. Their narrative practice indicates a self that is not wholly protected from white interpretations as we see that Chicano/a is an identity that some Mexican ancestry Latinos avoided or at best carefully tiptoed around.

### **Whitening and Racialization: Can/Do Mexican Americans Access Whiteness?**

With many arguments about the middleclass stemming from assimilation frameworks and questions about the ability for the middleclass to incorporate into a white middleclass, this section will address whether or not many Latino/a people are able to or want to participate in this supposed whitening of the Latino/a population. In the recent census data we saw a significant portion of Latinos/as mark white as their racial category, however, in this sample none of my respondents would say they are only white in everyday conversation, even my white/Latino multiracial respondents would say they are white only after some prodding.

Identifying as racially white was not common among my respondents. In fact many were adamant about never identifying as white with a confident “no” when I asked if they ever did identify that way. Instead many Mexican Americans experienced whiteness in a peripheral manner and instead only desired access to white coded

resources such as schools and jobs. I argue that attempts to deny or redirect white oppression in the form of racist discourse and racist practices by whites was viewed by these middleclass Latinos/as as bringing them closer to whiteness but never does/did it make them white. Haney Lopez makes this point,

True, these Latinos are rarely white in the sense that they are accorded the full range of racial privileges and presumptions Anglos reserve for themselves. But then, as with all racial categories, there are various shades of white, and many Latino leaders are arrayed along this continuum (Haney Lopez 2003:1-2).

Whites rarely ever have to think about being white, as it is second nature for their identities (Bourdieu 1977, Perry 2001, Feagin and Cobas forthcoming). Feagin and Dirks (2004) make a similar argument however their research illustrates that whites will don't place any people of color into the white category. Instead they show that more often only white ethnics are able to make it into the white categories, which resulted in a clear only whites on top racial hierarchy. Many respondents experienced moments where they were made aware of this whites on top racial hierarchy and some had vivid recollections where their family or friends commented on their connection to whiteness. In one case, a community organizer named Jenny, had an extreme experience with whitening, where her mother attempted to physically make her whiter. She describes this,

Jenny: My mom will tell me sometimes 'oh you're so light.' But when I was a kid she'd try to like bleach my skin to be lighter.

Daniel: Oh really.

Jenny: Yeah. And she'd always try to bleach her [own] skin.

Daniel: So why do you think she wanted to bleach your skin?

Jenny: 'Cause she wanted me to be whiter.

Jenny's mother so desperately wanted her daughter to be whiter she used skin bleach on her. Though this seems extreme Jenny understood her mother's actions as being relevant given her mother's experiences with racialization at the hands of whites and believed this illustrated her mother's deep level of caring for Jenny's well being. Her mother was aware of the skin tone hierarchy of the United States, and also realized that a lighter skinned Jenny would have greater opportunities. While physical attempts to whiten up were less common among my respondents, they represent an acute awareness by my respondents of the benefits of whiteness. Many respondents had just such experiences where they learned that they would be better off if their skin was lighter or closer to whiteness. But despite this realization, my respondents never fully identified as white and in fact overwhelmingly my respondents adamantly were against white as a racial identity describing their self. This means that though they realized whitening made life easier they also realized they could never truly access whiteness.

What I found was that these respondents, such as with Ricardo's previous account of Chicano racial identity, used whiteness in certain moments, namely when they were cornered to do so such as in "formal situations" (Brunsma, Delgado Rockquemore forthcoming)—highlighting a clear example of how identities are imposed

and forced upon Mexican Ancestry Latinos yet also highlighting how they dodge and duck to stave off this white racism.

In the 2000 and 2010 census many of the respondents were confused because they were told to choose a racial category as well as whether or not they were Hispanic/Latino/a. Often many of the respondents thought that this meant they were supposed to choose either White/Black/Asian/Native American for their race leaving out Latino/Mexican/Hispanic/Chicano and other versions of racial identities. Of course they felt none of these categories truly described their racial selves but interestingly they still nonetheless chose white over other racial categories.

Ramon, a broker/mortgage processor, notes this in our conversation about whether or not he is white:

Daniel: At any point in your life would you ever—or have you ever said that you're White?

Ramon: No. Just when I fill out applications.

Daniel: That's the only time?

Ramon: That's the only time.

For Ramon the only time he felt it was appropriate to identify racially as white was on forms. This means that for Ramon the only time he would actually describe himself as white was on job/school and other applications and forms. This is significant because it also means that in his everyday life he doesn't see himself as white. Ricardo elaborates in similar fashion but adds the crucial point that none of the other options fit "who I am".

My thoughts are, given a choice, given the limited number of choices, I would say, no I'm not black, no I'm not Asian, no I'm not Native American, the closest thing to who I am is white, because they don't offer me brown.

Also focusing on form's Ricardo answers similar to Ramon. Many of my respondents marked white on forms because they felt that none of the other categories fit their racial identification. Moreover many were lead to believe that their Mexican American identity is not a racial category because it wasn't listed on "official forms" such as the census. This has significant implications for our measures of the Latino/a population, especially for the largest sub-group of this population, Mexican ancestry Latinos. This means that the measures we have of the Latino/a population are at best flawed and at worst severely skewed toward whiteness. Also beyond issues with measurement in the Census and on other forms we also see that these Latinos rarely think about their racial self as white and only in the smallest cross sections of their daily experiences. The remainder of their lives they think about their racial identities as Mexican or Latino or Chicano or any other Latino descriptor but rarely as white.

Suane adds a bit more to the story by highlighting how many Latino/a people rationalize the irrationality (Bauman 2001) of the census measures of their racial identities. She says the following:

Suzanne: I'm racially white but I don't identify that way it's only on forms.



Daniel: So if someone asked you what race are you, how would you describe that?

Suzanne: Well see...okay I know racially the Census says I'm White, because like for statistical purposes, I'm racially White. 'Cause it's either Black or White but *I don't identify myself as racially White*

Later, a few minutes after being asked how she would identify if she were asked "on the street or in everyday life" what race she is, she concludes the following

'Cause I'm not White. I mean you've seen me. But if a White person says "well, you're not White." Well, I know that but I'm not Black. So it's like where do you fit in? And if there's two options, then...then you're White.

Suzanne believes that according to the US Census she is racially white to which she acquiesces. She agrees to this largely because she is aware of the consequences of being at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Her responses illustrate two elements about whiteness for these Latinos/as: that they are often backed into the corner of identifying as white on forms where the racial categories are inaccurate and they eventually choose a form of qualified whiteness based on the way in which their racial identities will be perceived. If these Latino/a people, many with medium to dark skin tones, identify with Bonilla Silva's (2002) "collective black" they will be denied access to the white coded resources of the middleclasses. Like Henry Louis Gates showing the police his drivers license, Latinos/as believe their actions of identifying as white will alleviate the suspicions of whites about their status as 'good, productive, (potentially) white, citizens

of the US'. In this instance they are offered, to use Haney Lopez's argument, a shade of whiteness. They are not white in the same sense as Europeans or other Anglos but as I mentioned before give a key to access portions of white resources.

However I argue, as I did in the previous chapter, that this doesn't necessarily account for desires to be white nor does it mean that Latinos are whole heartedly accepted as white. Suzanne's second set of statements above also highlight how whites control whiteness and she admits that at any point if whites determine her race then she's that race irrespective of how she identifies in the moment. In these instances Latino/a people use this ever changing access to what Duster (2001) describes as vapor like whiteness to garner middleclass coded white resources. Suzanne took whites saying that she wasn't black to mean that she was the only other option white agentically moving through the racial hierarchy to access its resources. While she is arguably not white and instead is at most "honorary white," I argue that this is significantly different than assimilation to whiteness or even internalization of whiteness. These Latinos are instead using this access to an oscillating whiteness to access white resources; as Ryan stated in the previous chapter "there's no shame in my game" and using whiteness was a necessary evil for these respondents. Many of them are not saying they are white in their everyday lives rather only as they deem it necessary to use elements or shades of whiteness in a given context or social interaction.

## **Conclusion**

With a heavy focus on how imposition in relation to the middleclasses own understanding of their racial selves works in certain contexts this chapter address

structure and agency. As we see that while structures do confine, individuals make constrained or parameterized decisions about their racial selves. As with a Chicano identity many respondents didn't identify as such while other did, highlighting a complex understanding of how the racial self is structured and practiced. This was also illustrated in their discussions of the relationship their citizenship and their racial identities have as many of the respondents felt that citizenship was exclusively held for whites in the United States. Though the respondents felt they were citizens most felt they were never seen as citizens indicating that white oppression based on racial phenotype and its various social implications excluded them from the national body. What is most interesting is that these individuals are arguably the most assimilated (Vallejo 2012) of all Mexican Ancestry Latinos, yet they still nonetheless feel significantly excluded. I argue this is largely because the scholar such as Vallejo (2012 also see Macias 2006) ignore or push aside racial inequality for analyses focused on ethnicity and arguments centered on racial stereotyping. With these theoretical, analytical, and conceptual moves in their research they fail to see how citizenship is less about actual documentation and more about larger processes of race and white supremacy. But beyond the fallacies of academic work this exclusion can also be attributed to the racial climates of the cities they live in, as each is centered on the racial oppression of Latino/a people.

I also noted in this chapter these Latinos/as are not, in totality, becoming white, however, they are able to access whiteness in spurts and for moments in time. Moreover, they rarely see their selves as racially white, with many of them claiming that if they ever say they are white its on formal applications, surveys and forms that often only give

them the option for Black, White, Asian, and/or Native none of which fully capture their racial identities. Because of their keen awareness of white control of the racial hierarchies they take full advantage of any opportunities to not be lumped at the bottom of the racial hierarchy where racialization leads to dire consequences. Because of their middleclass status these Latinos are more likely to be better equipped to negotiate these racial hierarchies than poor, working class, or recent immigrants. Their savvy attention to the ways in which whites control and manipulate the racial hierarchy often lead them to performing white coded narratives or flip-flopping in their responses to questions about their racial identities. Ultimately however, they recognize that whiteness is reserved for those with white skin, English last names, and a white-coded accent.

This chapter highlights the ways in which middleclass Latino/a people's identities are experienced. It is not meant to be exhaustive of all elements of their racial selves however it does show that despite their middleclass status whiteness is not accessible for them and white coded resources are only intermittently accessed. This intermittent access is certainly more than working class or poor Mexican Americans have, yet it is largely only available because they must shift elements of their racial selves to align with white interpretations of what Mexican American identity is appropriate. Such as when some respondents avoided Chicano and only used Hispanic they were attempting to gain intermittent access, because as I noted in my own experience in Chapter I, once they see your 'Mexican tell' (in my case my last name) white oppression kicks in excluding us from white coded middleclass resources.

In the chapter that follows I conclude this discussion on the middleclass. Focusing on what this dissertation has accomplished I provide insight into the ways in which middleclass Mexican Americans have been racialized despite their class status. I also will provide a discussion of how this study can be improved to better understand these complex racial identities. I end Chapter VII with suggestions for future research on the Latino/a middleclass as well as on how public policy might need to shift with this research.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Addressing the racial identities of Mexican Ancestry Latino/a people is a monstrous task. Mexican ancestry Latinos, as with other Latino/a racial groups are significantly different based on geography, generation of immigration, histories of racialization, and class status to name only a few factors. This means that addressing a singular racial self for these individuals is impossible, yet there is some racial cohesiveness among this group of people. Bonilla-Silva notes this in a discussion regarding Omi and Winant's (1994) understanding of the formation of racial categories, "In their view race should be regarded as an organizing principle of social relationships that shapes the identity of individual actors at the micro level and shapes all spheres of social life at the macro level (1994:466). As an organizing principle for identity the processes of racialization shape these Latinos/as lives at all levels.

The previous chapters have illustrated how this is experienced on the everyday micro level by middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as. Beyond this, it highlights the way in which racism and white oppression are always a constant negotiation for these Latinos/as. They must on a daily, micro interactional level respond to racial oppression and, unfortunately their middleclass class status does not mitigate or fully alleviate this oppression. Moreover in some instances this class status subjects them to increased racial oppression in the everyday experience when compared to their poor or working class counterparts who live in segregated neighborhoods.

In what follows I will address the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis chapters presented in this dissertation. I organize this chapter into two focal points of racial identities and identity practices. I then conclude with a brief discussion of the 10% rule for college admissions and how it is supposed to provide Latinos (and other people of color) greater socioeconomic opportunities but is in reality a further entrenchment in racial inequality. This conclusion shows how policy must be refocused on racial inequality by moving away from a heavy focus on class inequality for Latinos.

### **Racial identities and the Latino/a Middleclass**

This dissertation addresses several key elements for thinking about the racial identities of Latino/a people. Racial identities are largely formed at the intersection of agency and structures. However, for many middleclass Mexican Ancestry Latinos/as this intersection was often one where the white controlled structures left them with little room for agency. While there is growing scholarship on the Latino/a middleclass and a few scholars that have focused on racialization and the Latino/a middleclass (Chavez 2011, Feagin and Cobas 2008, forthcoming) none have exclusively focused on what this means for their racial identities. Omi and Winant argue (1997) that racial identities are a central element that impacts the lives of all people including whites (McIntosh 1988, Feagin, Vera, Batur 2000). The Latino/a middleclass is not any different, their racial selves shape their experiences significantly as processes of racial oppression impact their abilities to be part of the middleclass, the national body, and even participate in a Chicano/a identity that was created for them by previous generations of Mexican Americans.

In Chapter IV I argue that the middleclasses and all Latinos/as living in the two cities of Phoenix, Arizona and San Antonio, Texas encounter racial narratives that dictate and map their racial selves. This mapping often is shaped by the racial hierarchies of the United States and is significant for thinking about the context in which our racial selves are available. Thinking about how whites, whiteness and white controlled racial hierarchies shape these racial selves becomes clear as the racial climates of these cities are extremely hostile and riddled racist with undertones and overtones. The data presented in Chapter IV provide examples of exactly what the racial tone of each cities is as it is encountered by middleclass Latinos/as living in each.

The most important part of this discussion is not necessarily the oppressive discourses in each city as many US cities reflect such discourse regarding people of color, but the importance is clear when we consider that these discourse exist in two cities with very large Mexican origin Latino/a populations. Often in cities such as this it would be assumed that the Mexican Ancestry population would be less likely to encounter such heavily racist and oppressive discourse especially since the whites who perpetrate this discourse make up such a small portion of the numeric population. This provides empirical evidence for the way in which race and racialization are not tied only to demographic shifts in population sizes but also to the way in which social power and racial hierarchies are embedded in the structures of the cities of the U.S. The presence of this discourse in San Antonio and Phoenix is also incongruous with academic arguments about how the Mexican origin Latino/a population is upwardly mobile and vibrantly growing. These authors argue that (Telles and Ortiz 2008, Jimenez 2010,



Agius Vallejo 2012) a new middleclass that is making strides in President Obama's new society. I argue that these racial climates illustrate anything but a climate in which Latino/a people can be truly successful, because at every turn they must negotiate, resist, and fend off racism by whites. They live in cities such as San Antonio, where the iconography of the city itself relies on a history of the present that characterizes Mexican people as venal, enemies of whites. The icon of the Alamo pours out of every nook and cranny of the cityscape, providing a context where this white supremacist history is instantiated in every street, business, organization, art gallery, restaurant, park and neighborhood carrying its namesake. This leaves the Latino community with little recourse but acquiesce to its presence and to negotiate its impact in their daily lives.

Similarly Phoenix provides little difference with regard to its racial climate as it also has a cloud of white supremacy hovering over its 252 square miles. In the case of Phoenix we see that this white supremacy has a specific face and location—the MCSO headed by Sheriff Joe Arpaio. He has arguably become one of the most vocal figures against immigration of Latinos/as. He and his deputies have been on numerous media outlets arguing for tighter controls of the borders and advocating for the passage of legislation such as Arizona's anti-immigration bill SB 1070<sup>30</sup>. I provide a descriptive analysis underscoring the racial narratives he uses to oppress Latinos/as in his press releases. While not all these press releases are used by the media they nonetheless

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<sup>30</sup> As I write this the Department of Justice Federal court Judge found that Arpaio's office was practicing racial profiling regarding Latino/a people living in Maricopa County. This further supports my argument for his implementation of a racist climate directing racist surveillance and terrorism at all individuals who are part of the Latino/a community.

highlight how this law enforcement agency, with its large presence in the Phoenix Metro area, feels about the Latino/a community.

Sheriff Arpaio's press releases illustrate the racist and white supremacist narratives that pervade Phoenix. It underscores a blanket narrative that penetrates the everyday experiences of the Latinos who live in the city. Like the narrative of the Alamo, Arpaio's racism impacts Latinos/as such that they are often unaware of its ubiquity. The racial climate created is one where their racial selves are directly shaped by these discourse about who, is criminal, and who belongs in the city space. Moreover this discourse works in true Foucaultian fashion as it creates an environment of surveillance shaping the experiences of the middleclass (Foucault 1977). This narrative of surveillance lumps and splits (Zerubavel 1996) the population in Phoenix into White and Latinos; polarizing the community where whites are rightful occupier-citizens and the Latino/a community is all filed under non-citizen criminals. This identity constrains all the Latinos in this space and is a particularly problematic narrative for the middleclass, as they must interact with whites with more frequency than working class or poor Latinos. This everyday contact with whites and this white supremacist discourse has a significant impact on how they view the city space and how they experience their racial identities in this space.

The middleclass Latinos/as in these cities are constantly on edge as they try to gain a foothold in the racist political climate and largely white controlled business communities. While each city presents its own unique set of problems they both prove to be hostile spaces for the Latino/a middleclasses. Though it can be argued that each

certainly has its share of elements supporting the Latino/a community. San Antonio and Phoenix each have vibrant Latino/a art communities facilitating the growth of critical culture and politics pertaining to the Mexican American communities. Both cities have historical and contemporary recognitions of the Latino/a community with murals, museums, and festivals centered on culture and heritage. San Antonio even recently had a significant increase in representation in the largely white dominated city politics and while Phoenix lags behind, its Latino community has been pushing for more representatives in the recent years. Yet despite all this, the Mexican American middleclass encounters daily experiences with racist discourse and as I noted in Chapter IV is made aware of the segregation of the city.

This chapter sets up Chapters V and VI as it clarifies the racial climates of everyday racism that impacts and maps their racial identities for them. These identity maps are present in the logics of the discourse present in each city. San Antonio has a logic where in whites are virtuous and Latinos are invaders, and similarly Phoenix has a narrative map with logics that illustrate Latinos/as as criminals and invaders. These logics I argue are what Latino/a people must deflect and negotiate but they are also logics that fuel the manifestation of racial identities that are imposed on Latinos. Each cities white racist logic broadly facilitates the presence of narratives of Latinos/as as racial other, invader, and criminal.

In Chapter V shows how the middleclass is acting in the context of this structural and systemic oppression as they negotiate their identities or what they are doing as whites oppress them. I argue that this represents a form of agency, one that is heavily

curtailed and constrained, it nonetheless illustrates identity strategies and practices.

While a large portion of the scholarship on race and racism gives only slight recognition to the ways Latino/a people negotiate racism, I argue that it is equally as significant as the manifestations of oppression themselves. These Latino/a people find their racial selves bending and flexing under the pressures of white oppression. While using three forms of negotiation—wielding dominant narratives, overt deflection, and middleclass mitigation—the Latino/a middleclass is able to, albeit with a fight at every turn, gain some access to some white coded middleclass resources.

Chapter V however, also highlights much more than just how Latinos/as are negotiating, it also illustrates that they are participating in the formation of their racial selves. While I argue in this dissertation that selves are imposed, I also recognize that the middleclass are actors in the Goffmanian dramaturgy. Purely docile, subaltern bodies do exist but I don't argue that this group constitutes this subject location at all times. Instead they are able to move in and out of the middleclass as the largely white controlled gates to this middleclass swing open and closed. Their practices of the self can provide the keys allowing their entry, however, once they have accesses this social space their presence is tenuous at best. Once in this middleclass space they want to remain and have the option of deploying several racial identity practices to maintain their racial selves. This deployment of selves doesn't come with any guarantees, in fact the end result of their deployments are often in the hands of whites and white controlled racial hierarchies. The deflections I describe in Chapter V represent the middleclass' agency, and ultimately provide insight into how the middleclasses think about the racism they

encounter everyday in the racial climates of Phoenix, San Antonio, and the United States in general.

Despite my insight into their practices of deflection, these Latinos racial selves are still imposed and racist narratives of identities are still mapped onto these individuals. This discussion represents the “interstitial space,” the crack, the gap in racial structures where these Latino/a people are able to counter the narratives of white oppression. This is important because many scholars have argued that people of color have agency however, few have mapped out this agency. While, as I show the space for agency in the face of white oppression is very small and its effectiveness is questionable, it does exist. Our identities are accomplished in some capacity as we move, bend, and contort our identities in the presence of power forces of white oppression.

While Chapters IV and V show a racial climate for the Latino/a middleclass as well as the way in which they feel about their position in these climates, Chapter VI provides the linkage illuminating how these imposed identities are manifest. I provide a focus on three identity experiences common for the respondents in this discussion—racialized citizenship, White identity and Chicano/a identity. These three identity experiences encompass a complex racial identity for Mexican American middleclass Latinos. I focus on these three because attempting to pin down a master identity for Mexican Americans is not possible. The matrix of identities (Brunsma, Delgado, Rockquemore forthcoming) are numerous and multiplicative as we begin to measure and examine how people talk about their racial selves. Instead I chose to focus on three racial selves that have a significant hand in shaping who Mexican ancestry Latinos are; I use

these three identities as boundaries for thinking about where to conceptualize the racial identities of my respondents. In many ways most of my respondents were absolute about these three identities which provides a clear understanding of what constitutes a middleclass Latino/a self.

A Chicano/a identity, argues many Chicano/a scholars (Acuna 2003, Hurtado and Gurin 2004 ), is one that was created by Mexican ancestry people occupying the borderlands of the US. However, in my discussion of this racial identity very few of my respondents employed this racial self. This avoidance can largely be attributed to the ways in which white supremacist discourse has drawn specific boundaries around what constitutes this racial self. In my respondents narratives Chicano/a identity is likened to a gangster identity and criminality drawing on old white supremacist racializations that maintain oppressive racial hierarchies for Latinos/as.

These experiences and understandings regarding how my interviewees perceive Chicano/a identity should be considered in relation to Rudy's quote from the very beginning of this dissertation. Rudy makes the compelling statement that what he thought he knew about the world was tacitly untrue and his current knowledge represents an element of his "mis-education." I argue that what Rudy is really talking about is our way of knowing who we are as Chicanos and/or Latinas and/or Mexican Americans etc., and that this 'knowing' is fundamentally about the knowledges we have available to us. Whites impositions of our identities "work" because knowledges about Chicano/a, Latino/a, Mexican American etc... are obfuscated and hidden from Latina people. Sometimes this is manifest in overt practices such as when school boards cut

ethnic studies programs in secondary schools other times its less salient and present only as we start to see certain patterns; such as the systematic fracturing and razing of Chicano/a communities around the country (Villa 2000, Avila 2004, Diaz 2005).

Rudy later asks the rhetorical question of “How can I be an immigrant, when I’m from here?” This statement isn’t merely about documentation but rather it is about knowledge of the racial histories of the space of the southwest. He was arguing that because his family has lived in the Southwest and Arizona in particular for centuries he can’t possibly be an immigrant irrespective of his “documentation”. Like many of my respondents there was a clear linkage between whiteness and citizenship and many of my respondents understood this connection.

The middleclass felt personally as though they should be considered citizens however, they were rarely treated as such. This break in their experiences proved to be difficult for many of these individuals as they felt that the “American Dream of kids, a house, two cars” was not for them. In fact many of my respondents noted that there are different American dreams for Mexican Ancestry people than there are for whites; the Mexican American dream often constituted one where they “don’t have to worry” about oppression. While this isn’t the exact focus of this dissertation their worries lead them to practice their racial selves in very specific ways, negotiating, deflecting, and channeling their citizenship selves as whiteness dictated.

While this whiteness was oppressive, the benefits of a white identity are undeniably better materially than other racial identities if whiteness is accessible. However, none of the respondents could take on whiteness in a permanent way, nor did

they see their selves as white. As respondents lived their everyday lives negotiating white oppression this created a recognition that white coded resources were far better than those made available to people of color. This realization convinced many respondents to try to access white resources (such as living in certain neighborhoods, going to certain schools etc...). But to access these white resources whiteness had to be a salient part of their racial selves, an identity few of my respondents were ever given access. Instead they used the various strategies outlined in Chapters V and VI to access white coded resources intermittently. They acquiesced and deflected their way through elite law schools, colleges, and prestigious jobs. This movement into these middleclass worlds left them feeling as though they were inadequate or even impostors, and to some extent they were because these resources are structured, formed and organized for whites not Mexican Americans. Whiteness as an identity is never available to these respondents as an everyday constant identity, only when whites controlling racial hierarchies enable this as a possibility.

This dissertation investigates the way middleclass Mexican ancestry Latino/a people negotiate and experience the imposition of their racial identities. The processes of imposition and negotiation illustrate how the knowledges Mexican ancestry Latinos/as have about their racial selves are obscured, organized, and rearranged based on the power relations of particular spaces. In the context of these two cities the asymmetry of the power relations (one dominated by whites) Latino/a identities are made available only through racial hierarchies. Ultimately their racial selves are the products of occasional access to middleclass white resources through their deployment of specific



practices and through white acceptance of these practices. To be clear the white acceptance of their practices is crucial, as I noted in Chapter V, these Latinos/as may deploy certain practices but their effectiveness is ultimately decided by the way in which the racial hierarchy is defined in their racial contexts.

The impact of racial hierarchies is crucial in this analysis as it ultimately determines the identities of the middleclass. However, in this dissertation I argue that these hierarchies are more fluid than previous literature suggests or illustrates. The Latinos/as in this research are able to move through the hierarchies in ways that are different than for working class or poor Latino/a people. However, as I noted this is not because class status allows for the complete and total mitigation of race, it is in reality much more complex. These individual's class statuses are always intertwined with their race and as they negotiate white middleclass space, in an effort to access resources, their racial identities can be momentarily hidden from whites in control. This is because their class signifiers such as education, material possessions, and/or occupations are coded white. Having these white coded signifiers works much like a key to a lock, allowing the middleclasses access to the white resources. The process of unlocking these resources however, requires the middleclass to perform racial selves that are appropriate for the racial space and its hierarchies. This appropriate self, as I noted in Chapter VI, is difficult to pin down and is manifest in a series of complex and conflicting racial selves. While this may sound much like previous literature on passing and assimilation, it remains different because I am arguing that these respondents are not attempting to change their racial status where as the passing and assimilation literature argues that they

are trying to change. Instead the whites read their racial status as acceptable, as I show in chapters V and VI this acceptability varies and is contextual, thereby allowing them to gain access to white coded resources not whiteness.

These middleclass Mexican Americans are not white, nor are they becoming white. Their lives are at best momentarily shielded from white racism and tokenized (Flores 2011) and at worst they experience direct oppression at the hands of whites. This means their racial identities are not changing from once racialized group to a white racial group, such as Jewish people (Goldstein 2006). In fact as I noted very few felt as though they were seen as white or even wanted to become white, instead their racial identities are being negotiated as either those who are part of the honorary white or those who are part of the collective black. As Murgia and Saenz (2002) note the Latinos who access the honorary white spaces often vary based on their class status and in this research they are intermittently and temporarily able to access white controlled resources through a varied and strategic identity deployment in the face of oppressive racial contexts.

### **Future Discussion about Latinos/as and Middleclassness**

To briefly conclude this chapter I highlight the future directions for research on the Latino/a middleclasses and contributions this research has for public policy on Latinos/as and other racial groups. I make these arguments because much of our public policy centered on mitigating or eliminating racial inequality argues for the improvement of the socioeconomic status of people of color. However this research shows that irrespective of class status Latino/a people are required to negotiate white racism on a daily basis. This illustrates the larger focus present in public policy of viewing racism

and racial inequality as the “problem” of people of color and not of whites. I want to briefly provide an example of such a problem in the discussion of the 10% (now the 8%) rule used in Texas college admissions. I believe this legislation to represent a claim to move more people of color into the middleclasses via educational opportunities. I say claim because the effectiveness of these policies is largely superficial and I conclude with a recommendation for how these issues can be addressed more directly.

In the late 1990s the state of Texas instituted what is now referred to as the 10% rule whereby all graduating high school seniors would be granted automatic admission to any state college of their choice if they were in the top 10% of their graduating class. This meant that these individuals could easily access high quality education irrespective of their test scores or low ranking high school. The state legislature argued that this provided a truly merit based system for students in Texas to access higher education. This legislation also in many ways was a reaction to significant backlash against affirmative action programs and in particular those that are race based.

The result of these policies have been a slight increase in enrollment by students of color with a slight decline in whites for this university system. There have been critics of this policy from all sides of the fence. Some have pointed out how these admissions policies provide little academic diversity outside of the strict academic measures of high school class rank. These charges seem valid in many respects, as ability and contribution to an academic community are often not easily measured. Additionally, there have been arguments about the difference in high school quality, essentially stating that not all high schools are equal therefore neither are their students.

Also there have been arguments that parents “game the system” by moving their children to “easier” high schools guaranteeing their presence in the top 10% of their graduating class. Similarly argued is that in some schools there are students taking “easier” courses to guarantee higher grades and their spot in the top ten. The list of ways to circumvent the rigors of high school goes on but these are some of the more common critiques.

I argue that while these may be accurate depictions of possible scenarios regarding issues of this legislation, they are nonetheless very shortsighted critiques laced with racism. These arguments miss the fundamental problem that is central to both the legislation and its protractors critiques which is that there needs to be a better system for interpreting merit. Even the academic literatures while eventually becoming more critical of the 10% legislation (Harris and Tienda 2012) were initially happily purporting that it was helpful for people of color (Tienda and Sullivan 2010). I argue that the academic also largely ignore the systemic and white supremacy of the 10% rule. The logic of this entire discussion is that the Texas University system is central to the improvement of civic society and its people and it must therefore utilize the best method for bringing the most qualified individuals into its system. However, as many scholars of race have argued (Bell 2004, Bonilla Silva 2006) that our measures of merit are impossibly skewed toward whites and whiteness because of systemic racism (Feagin 2006). This means that because racism is systemic, it has pervaded these children’s lives throughout their educational careers and the measures of who has the most merit are going to be skewed toward white children—this is largely the case because our societies resources are skewed toward these whites in general. The 10% rule argues that merit will

be based on class rank, yet class rank is significantly impacted by race as it determines how children are organized, taught, and experience the educational system overall. This means that the students who access this 10% are more likely to be disproportionately white and middleclass.

However, this isn't the biggest problem with this rule, rather its biggest issue is with the concept of merit itself. Determining merit in a society that is significantly skewed in toward providing whites with greater access to resources determining merit will, of course, yield a greater number of whites displaying higher indicators of merit. This is the basic argument of literature on the "myth of meritocracy" (McIntosh 1990, Katznelson 2006) and it underscores the exact problem with the Texas ten percent legislation. College admissions is fundamentally not meritocratic, it is instead geared toward higher admissions of whites from the middle and upper classes. The ten percent rule is largely a white tactic to obscure the racism present in our educational systems.

What does this have to do with the Latino/a middleclass? In Texas Latino/a people, in theory, should have been profoundly impacted by this new legislation. By this I mean we should have been admitted in numbers comparable to our presence in the population, however, this was not the case. The legislation was supposed to provide a level playing field making it no longer necessary for state universities to account for race in admissions. However, admission rates at the two largest state universities still do not reflect that these schools are serving the Latino/a populations in a manner proportionate to their presence in the state. In fact the two largest state universities are well below

these figures with their Latino student populations firmly planted at 15% and 18% in a state that is almost 40% Latino (Harris and Tienda 2012).

I argue that a focus on the improving the socioeconomic status of the Latino/a middleclasses fundamentally falls short of alleviating the racial inequality they experience. Accessing the middleclass without fundamental shifts in racial inequality in many ways create more roadblocks and difficult experiences almost everyday of their lives. Many of my respondents talked about experiencing white racism in almost every social interaction they had, which amounts to a “racism at every turn” type of daily experience. Legislation geared to the improvement of Latino/a lives through white coded resources such as college are largely band-aids and pseudo-attempts at reducing or mitigating or, dare I say, eliminating racism.

Instead we need to learn more about the way in which Latinos/as and other people of color experience racism on a daily basis. I argue that this everyday racism is equally harmful to the growth of all people of color not only Mexican Americans. While large systemic and structural racism is certainly detrimental it is only one part of how racial oppression is working. Closer attention must be paid to how everyday experiences with racial inequality has a significant impact on Mexican American middleclass. Moreover policy such as the 10% rule should be far more attuned to how racial inequality arises before its implementation can truly be effective. State universities such as Texas A&M and University of Texas were instituted to serve the populations of Texas, yet neither has done this in their present state with their 10% policies.

College admissions must consider race in their acceptance but more than merely considering race these organizations must be restructured to accept and keep student of color enrolled. This means that in addition to changing admissions policies to admit a certain percentage of racial groups commensurate with their state populations they must hire and retain faculty and staff in similar numbers. This type of systemic change can significantly alter the experiences of all Latinos/as involved. While other problems will arise, Latino/a people will encounter fewer moments of “at every turn racism.”

This is useful for thinking about all sectors of society as college admissions can also be thought of a proxies for businesses and other organizations that have a responsibility to racial equality. I use universities as a mere example as they are among the first to encounter and navigate these issues. However, merit is certainly relevant and measured in all sectors of the labor market and the example set by universities can work to illustrate how other businesses should counteract and address racial inequality. Merely providing access to higher levels of socioeconomic status are not enough when the oppression is occurring along racial lines. Moreover, once these Latino/a people access the middleclasses their experiences with racism do not decrease and while I don't have aggregate data, my respondents experiences point to an increase in white oppression in Latinos/as everyday lives.

Generally speaking this dissertation illustrates how the Mexican American middleclasses experience processes of racialization and how these processes impact their racial identities. Broadly I conclude that they continue to experience racism and racial hierarchies in San Antonio and Phoenix in spite of these cities having large Mexican

ancestry populations and cultural presence. I argue that this presence maps the racial identities for Latinos/as out for them, leaving little room for negotiation and movement in their racial identities. The movement that they do have often manifests itself in limited fashion, intermittently providing them access to white controlled and white coded resources. This intermittent access shapes how they experience the imposition of their racial identities as their identities are heavily curtailed and policed by the racial hierarchies in which they live. While the middleclass in many ways, represents improvement in the lives of Mexican Americans in the US, this dissertation argues that this improvement should be conceptualized with significant caution as the middleclass continues to experience the effects of centuries of racialization and racial oppression.



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## APPENDIX I

### Recruitment Letter

Hello,

My name is Daniel J. Delgado and I am a graduate student in the department of Sociology at Texas A&M University in College Station. I have contacted you to ask if you would like to participate as an interviewee in my dissertation research project. The focus of this research is how Mexican Americans' experience living in Phoenix and San Antonio. Your feelings, experiences, and thoughts will help me to conceptualize how many Mexican Americans understand these cities and their selves.

The focus of the interview will be on your experiences as a Mexican American. I would like to ask you a few questions about your daily interactions with other people at work, at home, and on the street. I will ask questions about how living in the city of Phoenix or San Antonio is important in your life. Also questions about possible experiences related to discrimination will be part of the interview. Your opinion and experiences will contribute to a broader understanding of issues facing Mexican Americans.

To qualify for this research you must consider yourself to be of Mexican American ancestry and have **at least one** of the following:

- attended college for at least one semester or more
- a college and/or professional degree
- be currently attending college or professional school
- a household income around or above \$40,000 per year
- parents whose household income is around or above \$40,000

If you would like to participate and you meet the criteria mentioned we can conduct the interview in a location of your choice to talk about these topics. I may ask you if I can audio-record this interview, however, this will only be done if you agree. If you are interested or have any questions, contact me at the address or phone number listed below.

In your email please include a time, date, and location most convenient for you. If you know of any other Mexican Americans who qualify and you think might want to participate please feel free to forward this message to them.

Email: [dand80@neo.tamu.edu](mailto:dand80@neo.tamu.edu)

Phone: 210.421.7305

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Daniel Justino Delgado

## APPENDIX II

### Interview Instrument – San Antonio

Interview:

Date:

Pseudonym

Age:

Eye color:

Hair color:

Gender(s):

Occupation:

Approx. Annual Household Income:

Less than 20k

20k or more

30k or more

40k or more

50K or more

100K or more

200k or more

300K or more

400k or more

500k or more

Hometown:

Do you have any siblings?

How many?

Gender?

Do you have children?

How many?

Gender?

Did you attend public or private school?

If both how long for each?

What were the circumstances for attending both?

Educational background (highest level achieved): (Why \_\_\_\_\_ University?)

(If you attended) Where did you attend college (What part of the U.S.)?

Years Lived in San Antonio:

Years Lived in Southwestern U.S.:

Did you or your family immigrate to the United States?

If so when?

What generation Mexican American are you?

Part of the City currently living in (cardinal direction and/or nearest large intersection...Do you like living there? Why?):

Part of the city you were raised in (for those that have lived here for an extended period of time):

How many languages do you speak? Which ones?

How would you describe your religious affiliation?

Is religion a significant part of your life? (Do you regularly attend? Do you participate in your temple/mosque/church/etc...activities?)

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Do you have a significant other, spouse, or a partner?

If so what race/ethnicity is this person?

Historically have they been Mexican American only?

### Race/Ethnicity Questions

Skin tone

Skin tone (as I perceive them):

Dark

Medium

Lighter

Lightest

White

How would you describe your skin tone?

How did you come to understand your skin tone in this manner?

Did someone tell you that your skin tone was X?

Was there an event that you first remember your skin tone becoming known to you?

How old were you when this happened?

Where were you when this happened?

If someone asked you "what race are you?" how would you respond?

Do you perceive this to be different than your ethnicity?

If yes, what is your ethnicity to you?

Why do you differentiate it from your race?

Would you say you're white?

Do you use Mexican American, Spanish, Chican@, Latin@, Tejana, Mexican American, Mexican, Hispanic or something else to describe yourself? Why? What is important about these labels for you?

Are there contexts or places where it is more important to discuss one over the other?

Say at work is it better to be Chican@ over Hispanic? (primer for future questions about space).

Do you think Mexican Americans prefer to be lighter rather than darker in terms of skin tone?

Do you think Mexican American communities value lighter skin tones more than darker? Why?

Do you feel that you can identify someone as Mexican American just by looking at them?

How do you understand them to be Mexican American?  
Is there a typical Mexican American look?

### Understanding Racialization

Do you think people of Mexican Ancestry look a certain way in terms of their race/ethnicity?  
How do you differentiate between someone who is Anglo and someone who is Mexican American?  
What are some traits you would attribute to people of Mexican ancestry? Do you have these traits?  
Do you think you have been treated different because of your \_\_\_\_\_ (above described racial self)? For example many of the people I've interviewed describe being treated differently in some educational, business and social situations because of their accents and some even felt that it was because of their skin tone. Can you think of any places where this has happened to you?

### Treatment by Anglos

How do you think Anglos/Whites feel about you?  
How do you think Anglos/Whites generally feel about people with Mexican Ancestry?  
What stereotypes have you encountered?  
Where have you encountered these stereotypes? At work? At home? In public?  
Do you have any Anglo/white friends/colleagues/coworkers?  
What is your impression of how they feel about Mexican Americans?  
Do you think they see you differently than other Mexican Americans? Why?  
Do you think Anglos/whites view all Mexican Americans, Mexicans and all Latinos the same way?  
Get them to elaborate on why or why not?  
See if they'll give a personal story  
Do you think there certain characteristics that would make whites view Mexican Americans differently versus having other features?  
Do you think skin tone, eye color, hair color and other features matter in how whites will treat all Latin@s?

### Gender and Sexuality

Do you think Middleclass Mexican American Women (Men) are treated differently than Women (Men)?  
How so?  
Are there specific times when this may happen?

How do you think gay and lesbian Mexican Americans are perceived in the Mexican American Community as a whole?

Do you think that being heterosexual is synonymous with being Mexican American?

Do you think that Gay or Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans experience the world differently than heterosexual Middleclass Mexican Americans?

## Religion

What role does religion play in Mexican American Communities?

Do you think this is different for Mexican Americans who are middleclass?

Is it different for you?

## Language, History, Ancestry

How important do you feel Spanish is in the Mexican American Community?

Do you think this is also the case for Middleclass Mexican Americans?

Is it the case for you?

How important is Mexican American history to your understanding of yourself as a Mexican American?

Were you taught about Mexican American history?

What stands out to you, as a important event for Mexican Americans?

Do you teach your children about Mexican American history? What do you teach them?

How do your parents describe their racial identity? (If different from respondent ask why)

Give them the example of your own family's immigration to ease in to the question.

How is your family's initial immigration discussed by your family?

Is it discussed at all?

## Citizenship

How do you feel about being called Mexican American?

Do you feel American all the time?

Do you feel as though your always seen as an American?

Do you think people might mistake you for someone who isn't a citizen?

Do you think some Mexican Americans get mistaken for people who are not citizens?

Why?

Do you think Anglo people ever get mistaken for being not American citizens?

## Middleclassness



How do you talk about your socioeconomic status? Do you identify as working class, middleclass, or upperclass? Why?

What are the markers of being middleclass? Are there specific things that middleclass people own or possess?

Do you think these markers are the same for Anglos and Mexican Americans?

What are some markers of other class statuses?

Working class?

Upperclass

Poor?

Did you grow up middleclass?

How many generations of your family have grown up in the middleclass?

What did previous generations do to achieve middleclass status (what were their jobs, education levels etc..)?

Is there a moment when you realized you were middleclass?

Was it a realization that was made in reference to other Mexican Americans or other people of color?

Was it in relation to Anglos?

#### Assimilation

There is a lot of discussion about whether or not Mexican Americans are assimilating.

What does assimilation mean to you?

How do you feel about the idea of assimilation?

Do you think Mexican Americans should assimilate?

Are you assimilated?

Does going to college and getting a good job constitute assimilation?

#### Ties to Working Class & Immigrants

Do you feel ties to working class and poor Mexican Americans?

Do you have friends who might be working class or poor?

Do you feel ties to immigrant Mexicanos and Mexicanas?

Do you have friends who are first generation immigrants?

Do you think middleclass Mexican Americans experiences less racism than, say poor or working class, Mexican Americans?

If so why?

If not why not?

#### Class, Gender, and Sexuality

Do you think there are gender differences or benefits for Middleclass Mexican Americans versus working class or poor Middleclass Mexican Americans?

Do you think a Mexican American man or a woman is more likely to be perceived as middleclass?

In some of my conversations with other Middleclass Mexican Americans I've been told that it is easier for Gay and Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans to be "out" when they are in what they describe as middleclass spaces.

Do you think this is true? That it may be easier for Gay and Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans?

Why?

Does the middleclass MA community approach GLBTQ people in a different manner than poor or working class communities?

Space

The city

Why do you live in this city?

Do you enjoy living in this city? Why or why not?

Do you feel like there is a racial/ethnic organization in the city?(If yes ask them to describe it using cardinal directions)

Do you feel as though certain groups are segregated?

Why do you think this segregation is occurring?

Is there a white side of town? Black side? A Mexican American side?

How do you think the rest of the citizens of the city view Mexican Americans?

Do you think Middleclass Mexican Americans are viewed differently in San Antonio than working class and poor Mexican Americans?

Do you feel there are any spaces that are especially hostile to Mexican Americans?

Do you feel as though you can go into these spaces? Why Or Why not?

Has there ever been anything that has made you feel, as a Middleclass Mexican American, uncomfortable living in this city?

Has there ever been any event as a Middleclass Mexican American that has been a strong source of pride for living in this city?

What is the most common racial/ethnic group in your neighborhood?

Do you feel safer in this neighborhood rather than in others? Which ones do you think would be less safe?

Sexuality

Do you feel as though there are any spaces that are especially hostile to Gay and Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans?  
Are there particular parts of town that may be understood as Gay and Lesbian Friendly?  
Are these spaces friendly to Gay and Lesbian Mexican Americans?

### El Barrio

Often in Mexican American writing el Barrio is a space that is associated with Mexican Americans.  
How do you feel about the phrase or idea of the Barrio?  
Do you as a Middleclass Mexican American feel like the barrio is a place that you have social connections?  
Do you think a lot of Middleclass Mexican Americans live in the Barrio?  
How would you describe the Mexican Americans who live in the Barrio? Based on your experiences?  
Are there stereotypes?  
Do you think these stereotypes are accurate?  
Are you familiar with the stereotypes about Mexican American women as welfare queens and bad mothers that are associated with living in el barrio?  
Do you feel as though Middleclass Mexican American women who don't live in el barrio are treated differently in general?  
By Whites?  
Do you feel the suburbs in this city are more supportive of Middleclass Mexican Americans than the Barrio?  
Do you feel like there are Mexican American suburbs?  
Where are they?  
Why do you think they are in these parts of the city?

### Cultural Space

Are there areas in the city you feel that are especially supportive of Mexican Americans and Mexican American identities?  
Elaborate on why these places are especially supportive. What about these places etc...  
Are there specific places in the city that you feel especially connected to other Mexican Americans? Or Mexican American culture?  
Why do you feel this way in these spaces?  
In what ways do you feel the city is promoted as a Mexican American city?  
Tourism? Politics? Cultural Arts?  
Do you feel like the culture and histories of Mexican Americans is important to the officials who run the city? (Mayor, city council etc...)

### Space and History

Do you feel like the history of Mexican Americans is important to the other citizens living in this city?

Specify how they feel White people, view them.

In your opinion do you feel as though the city informs people who live in it about the history of Mexican Americans living here?

Do you think young Mexican Americans living in San Antonio are getting informed about the history of their city?

Do you know about the 1848 treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo?

Do you know why this is significant for Mexican Americans?

What do you know about the Battle of San Jacinto?

Do you feel as though the space of the Southwestern US a colonial space? Do you think it was colonized by white Europeans?

Questions for Middleclass Mexican Americans in S.A.

Alamo

Based on your understanding of history what is the importance or significance of the Alamo?

How do you feel about the Alamo?

Have you ever been to the Alamo?

How many times?

Why do you think the city holds the Alamo in such high regard?

There has been many critiques of the Alamo as a shrine to Anglo claims of superiority.

Do you think that Anglos feel the Alamo is a shrine to their supposed superiority?

Do you think there is a relationship between this claim to superiority and the implementation of laws such as SB 1070 and the bills proposed in Texas?

Hemisfair

How do you feel about Hemisfair park?

Do you know why the park exists? (explain why if they didn't know)

Have you ever been there?

(If age appropriate) Did you attend the Hemisfair Worlds Fair in 1968?

Riverwalk

How do you feel about the riverwalk?

Do you ever go to the riverwalk? Why?

What do you feel is the purpose of the riverwalk?

Do you feel as though the riverwalk helps Mexican Americans in this city? Does it help you?

## Fiesta

How do you feel about Fiesta?

Do you attend any events?

Why do you attend?

Who do you feel fiesta is for? Tourists? Anglos? Mexican Americans? Other people of color?

What do you think fiesta celebrates?

Is that different from what it actually celebrates?

Do you think Fiesta should be a source of pride for Mexican Americans?

Do you feel as though Fiesta incorporates all Mexican Americans?

What about GLBTQ MAs?

Do you think working class and poor Mexican Americans can participate in Fiesta?

## Neighborhood

What is the largest street intersection near your house? (main thoroughfares)

Do the houses in your neighborhood all look like they were built in the same time period?

Would you say that the homes in your neighborhood would all cost approximately the same amount of money? (of course not all homes are necessarily worth the same but I mean this in a general sense)

Do you live in a “subdivision”? (this is a phrase used by builders to describe a block or unit of homes they built or are building)

Does your neighborhood have a home owners association (HOA)?

If yes, do you know anyone on the board? What is the race of the people on the board of the Home Owners Association? How much are the HOA dues?

What would you change about your neighborhood?

What would you keep the same?

If you were to move would you choose a neighborhood similar to the one you live in now? Why or Why not?

Based on your experience, what would you say is the most common racial group that lives in your neighborhood? How do you feel about this? Do you like that it is majority this group? Why or Why not?

Do you like your neighborhood? Do you like your neighbors?

How often do you interact with your neighbors? Are they your friends? Based on your experience what race(s) are your immediate neighbors?

## General Questions about the city space

Is there a side of town you would prefer to live in?

Is there a side of town you would never live in?  
Do you think San Antonio is a multicultural city? Why? What does multicultural mean to you? Do you think this multiculturalism is “sincere”?

### Immigration and Immigration Legislation

How do you feel about immigration from Mexico?  
Do you think that the US treats immigrants fairly?  
If you owned a business would you employ immigrants?  
Would you employ immigrants as domestic workers?  
Do you think there are stereotypes about immigrants? What might they be?  
Do you think there are any middleclass immigrants coming to the United States?  
Have you ever heard of the Arizona Bill SB1070 (If they’ve never heard of it provide description of the bill)?  
How do you feel about SB 1070?  
It has been called racist by many people, do you think it is racist?  
Do you think that skin tone is a factor in understanding who falls under the reach of this bill?  
Do you think you could fall under its legislation? By this I mean, do you think you might be suspected of being an “illegal immigrant”? Why or Why not?  
There has been a large amount of people protesting SB1070 do you think that these protests are important?  
Based on your experiences do you feel as though the Anglo population as a whole supports this Bill?  
Have you talked to your Anglo friends/colleagues/coworkers about SB 1070?  
Have you talked to any (other) pro-SB1070 people  
Why do you think they support this bill or its ideas?  
How did these conversations about this bill make you feel?  
Do you think you or any other Middleclass Mexican Americans have anything to gain from the passage of this Bill?  
Do you think that being middleclass will lessen the impact a bill such as this will have on you?

### Middleclass Mexican Americans in Texas

There are several bills like SB 1070 in that are being introduced to the Texas legislature, do you think they will be passed?  
Do you think there is a different view of Mexican people in Texas than in Arizona?  
If these bills are passed in Texas how would that make you feel about living in Texas and in San Antonio?  
Do you think it will have an impact on the racial climate in San Antonio?

### Cultural Practices

What do you think of when you think of Mexican American culture?

Do you feel as though there are specific things you do that tie you to Mexican American culture?

Do you listen to Spanish Language music?

Which kind?

Do you feel this music is important to your Mexican American heritage?

Do you often cook or eat Mexican food?

What is your favorite dish? Why?

How did you learn to prepare Mexican food?

Who taught you?

Why do you think this person taught you to prepare food?

Was this person significant in your understanding of your Mexican Americanness?

Do you own anything that you feel signifies your Mexican American heritage? Why does it do this? Can't just anyone own this and feel the same way?

#### Parental Relationships

How do your parents identify in terms of their race?

Why do you think they identified this way?

Do you feel as though the way they talk think about their race impacts yours?

Do you think differently than your parents?

#### For those with Children

Do you feel it is important for you children to recognize their Mexican American cultural ancestry?

Are there things you do to help them maintain this understanding of their identity?

Are there things they do to maintain this ancestry?

How important is this ancestry to your children?

(If you have children or if you hypothetically have them) Would you prefer your children to be romantically involved with someone who is of Mexican American Ancestry?

Are there other factors that you feel might be more important in their choice of romantic partner(s)?

#### Wrap up questions

Do you feel that being Mexican American has significant advantages or disadvantages?

Why?

Was there anyone else you can think impacted the way you think about yourself as a Mexican American? (Ask questions about MA heroes or idols or mentors etc...)

Is there any advice you would give to Mexican Americans who are younger than you who are going to school, starting their own business or generally trying to achieve middleclass status?

What were your reasons for participating in this interview?



### APPENDIX III

#### Interview Instrument – Phoenix

Interview:

Date:

Pseudonym:

#### Demographics

Age:

Eye color:

Hair color:

Gender(s):

Occupation:

Approx. Annual Income:

Less than 20k

20k or more

30k or more

40k or more

50K or more

100K or more

200k or more

300K or more

400k or more

500k or more

Hometown:

Do you have any siblings?

How many?

Gender?

Do you have children?

How many?

Gender?

Did you attend public or private school?

If both how long for each?

What were the circumstances for attending both?

Educational background (highest level achieved): (Why \_\_\_\_\_ University?)

(If you attended) Where did you attend college (What part of the U.S.)?

Years Lived in Phoenix:

Years Lived in Southwestern U.S.:

Did you or your family immigrate to the United States?

If so when?

What generation Mexican American are you?

Part of the City currently living in (cardinal direction and/or nearest large intersection...Do you like living there? Why?):

Part of the city you were raised in (for those that have lived here for an extended period of time):

How many languages do you speak? (which ones)

How would you describe your religious affiliation?

Is religion a significant part of your life? (Do you regularly attend? Do you participate in your temple/mosque/church/etc...activities?)

How would you describe your sexual orientation? (This question may need to wait, depending on the person/context)

Do you have a significant other, spouse, or a partner?

If so what race/ethnicity is this person?

Historically have they been Mexican American only?

## Race/Ethnicity Questions

### Skin tone

Skin tone (as I perceive them):

Dark

Medium

Lighter

Lightest

White

How would you describe your skin tone?

How did you come to understand your skin tone in this manner?

Did someone tell you that your skin tone was X?

Was there an event that you first remember your skin tone becoming known to you?

How old were you when this happened?

Where were you when this happened?

If someone asked you "what race are you?" how would you respond?

Do you perceive this to be different than your ethnicity?

If yes, what is your ethnicity to you?

Why do you differentiate it from your race?

Would you say you're white?

Do you use Mexican American, Spanish, Chican@, Latin@, Tejana (Skip for AZ & CA), Arizonan, Mexican American, Mexican, Hispanic, Mestizaje, Indio/a or something else to describe yourself? Why? What is important about these labels for you?

Are there contexts or places where it is more important to discuss one over the other?  
Say at work is it better to be Chican@ over Hispanic? (primer for future questions about space).

Do you think Mexican Americans prefer to be lighter rather than darker in terms of skin tone?

Do you think Mexican American communities value lighter skintones more than darker? Why?

Do you feel that you can identify someone as Mexican American just by looking at them?

How do you understand them to be Mexican American?

Is there a typical Mexican American look?

How do your parents describe their racial identity? (If different from respondent ask why)

Understanding Racialization

Do you think people of Mexican Ancestry look a certain way in terms of their race/ethnicity?

How do you differentiate between someone who is Anglo and someone who is Mexican American?

What are some traits you would attribute to people of Mexican ancestry? Do you have these traits?

Do you think you have been treated different because of your \_\_\_\_\_ (above described racial self)? For example many of the people I've interviewed describe being treated differently in some educational, business and social situations because of their accents and some even felt that it was because of their skin tone. Can you think of any places where this has happened to you?

Treatment by Anglos

How do you think Anglos/Whites feel about you?

How do you think Anglos/Whites generally feel about people with Mexican Ancestry?

What stereotypes have you encountered?

Where have you encountered these stereotypes? At work? At home? In public?

Do you have any Anglo/white friends/colleagues/coworkers?

What is your impression of how they feel about Mexican Americans?

Do you think they see you differently than other Mexican Americans? Why?

Do you think Anglos/whites view all Mexican Americans, Mexicans and all Latinos the same way?

Get them to elaborate on why or why not?

See if they'll give a personal story

Do you think there certain characteristics that would make whites view Mexican Americans differently versus having other features?

(if they don't elaborate on above question) Do you think skin tone, eye color, hair color and other features matter in how whites will treat all Latin@s?

### Gender and Sexuality

Do you think Middleclass Mexican American Women (Men) are treated differently than Women (Men)?

How so?

Are there specific times when this may happen?

How do you think gay and lesbian Mexican Americans are perceived in the Mexican American Community as a whole?

Do you think that being heterosexual is synonymous with being Mexican American?

Do you think that Gay or Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans experience the world differently than heterosexual Middleclass Mexican Americans?

### Religion

What role does religion play in Mexican American Communities?

Do you think this is different for Mexican Americans who are middleclass?

Is it different for you?

### Language, History, Ancestry

How important do you feel Spanish is in the Mexican American Community?

Do you think this is also the case for Middleclass Mexican Americans?

Is it the case for you?

How important is Mexican American history to your understanding of yourself as a Mexican American?

Were you taught about Mexican American history?

What stands out to you, as a important event for Mexican Americans?

Do you teach your children about Mexican American history? What do you teach them?

Do you think Arizona and Phoenix has had a significant role in Chican@ or Mexican American histories? Are there any events or moments that come to mind for you?

### History of the Southwest

#### Alamo

Based on your understanding of history what is the importance or significance of the Alamo?

How do you feel about the Alamo?

Have you ever been to the Alamo?

How many times?

There has been many critiques of the Alamo as a shrine to Anglo claims of superiority.

Do you think that Anglos feel the Alamo is a shrine to their supposed superiority?

### Citizenship

How do you feel about being called Mexican American?

Do you feel American all the time?

Do you feel as though your always seen as an American?

Do you think people might mistake you for someone who isn't a citizen?

Do you think some Mexican Americans get mistaken for people who are not citizens?

Why?

Do you think Anglo people ever get mistaken for being not American citizens?

What does the American dream mean to you?

Do you feel like you are living the American dream?

Is the Mexican American dream different from the Anglo American dream?

### Middleclassness

Are you middleclass? Do you identify as working class, middleclass, or upperclass?

Why?

What are the markers of being middleclass? Are there specific things that middleclass people own or possess?

Do you think these markers are the same for Anglos and Mexican Americans?

What are some markers of other class statuses?

Working class?

Upperclass

Poor?

Did you grow up middleclass?

How many generations of your family have grown up in the middleclass?

What did previous generations do to achieve middleclass status (what were their jobs, education levels etc..)?

Is there a moment when you realized you were middleclass?

Was it a realization that was made in reference to other Mexican Americans or other people of color?

Was it in relation to Anglos?

### Assimilation

There is a lot of discussion about whether or not Mexican Americans are assimilating.  
What does assimilation mean to you?  
How do you feel about the idea of assimilation?  
Do you think Mexican Americans should assimilate?  
Are you assimilated?  
Does going to college and getting a good job constitute assimilation?

#### Ties to Working Class & Immigrants

Do you feel ties to working class and poor Mexican Americans?

Do you have friends who might be working class or poor?  
Do you feel ties to immigrant Mexicanos and Mexicanas?  
Do you have friends who are first generation immigrants?  
Do you think middleclass Mexican Americans experiences less racism than, say poor or working class, Mexican Americans?  
If so why?  
If not why not?

#### Class, Gender, and Sexuality

Do you think there are gender differences or benefits for Middleclass Mexican Americans versus working class or poor Middleclass Mexican Americans?  
Do you think a Mexican American man or a woman is more likely to be perceived as middleclass?  
In some of my conversations with other Middleclass Mexican Americans I've been told that it is easier for Gay and Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans to be "out" when they are in what they describe as middleclass spaces.  
Do you think this is true? That it may be easier for Gay and Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans?  
Why?  
Does the middleclass MA community approach GLBTQ people in a different manner than poor or working class communities?

#### Space

#### The city

Why do you live in this city (by city I mean the entire valley)?  
Do you enjoy living in this city? Why or why not?

Do you feel like there is a racial/ethnic organization in the city? (If yes ask them to describe it using cardinal directions)  
Do you feel as though certain groups are segregated?  
Why do you think this segregation is occurring?  
Is there a white side of town? Black side? A Mexican American side?  
Are there Mexican American suburbs in Phoenix? Where are they? Would you live there? Are these Mexican American suburbs middleclass suburbs? Are they the same as predominantly Anglo suburbs? Are there differences?  
How do you think the rest of the citizens of the city view Mexican Americans?  
Do you think Middleclass Mexican Americans are viewed differently in Phoenix than working class and poor Mexican Americans?  
Do you feel there are any spaces that are especially hostile to Mexican Americans?  
Do you feel as though you can go into these spaces? Why Or Why not?  
Has there ever been anything that has made you feel, as a Middleclass Mexican American, uncomfortable living in this city?  
Has there ever been any event as a Middleclass Mexican American that has been a strong source of pride for living in this city?  
What is the most common racial/ethnic group in your neighborhood?  
Do you feel safer in this neighborhood rather than in others? Which ones do you think would be less safe?

### Sexuality

Do you feel as though there are any spaces that are especially hostile to Gay and Lesbian Middleclass Mexican Americans?  
Are there particular parts of town that may be understood as Gay and Lesbian Friendly?  
Are these spaces friendly to Gay and Lesbian Mexican Americans?

### El Barrio

Often in Mexican American writing el Barrio is a space that is associated with Mexican Americans.  
How do you feel about the phrase or idea of the Barrio?  
Do you as a Middleclass Mexican American feel like the barrio is a place that you have social connections?  
Do you think a lot of Middleclass Mexican Americans live in the Barrio?  
How would you describe the Mexican Americans who live in the Barrio? Based on your experiences?  
Are there stereotypes?  
Do you think these stereotypes are accurate?  
Are you familiar with the stereotypes about Mexican American women as welfare queens and bad mothers that are associated with living in el barrio?

Do you feel as though Middleclass Mexican American women who don't live in el barrio are treated differently in general?

By Whites?

Do you feel the suburbs in this city are more supportive of Middleclass Mexican Americans than the Barrio?

Do you feel like there are Mexican American suburbs?

Where are they?

Why do you think they are in these parts of the city?

### Cultural Space

Are there areas in the city you feel that are especially supportive of Mexican Americans and Mexican American identities?

Elaborate on why these places are especially supportive. What about these places etc...

Are there specific places in the city that you feel especially connected to other Mexican Americans? Or Mexican American culture?

Why do you feel this way in these spaces?

In what ways do you feel the city is promoted as a Mexican American city?

Tourism? Politics? Cultural Arts?

Do you feel like the culture and histories of Mexican Americans is important to the officials who run the city? (Mayor, city council etc...)

Overall do you think the history of the Mexican American community in Phoenix important for you?

### Space and History

Do you feel like the history of Mexican Americans is important to the other citizens living in this city?

Specify how they feel White people, view them.

In your opinion do you feel as though the city informs people who live in it about the history of Mexican Americans living here?

Do you think young Mexican Americans living in Phoenix are getting informed about the Mexican American history of their city?

Do you know about the 1848 treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo?

Do you know why this is significant for Mexican Americans?

What do you know about the Battle of San Jacinto?

Do you feel as though the space of the Southwestern US a colonial space? Do you think it was colonized by white Europeans?

### Questions for Middleclass Mexican Americans in Phoenix



## Heritage Square

Have you ever been to heritage square?

Why do you think its called heritage square?

Do you think it is reflective of the heritage of this community?

How do you think Mexican American heritage “fits” into this history?

Is it for the Mexican American community?

Is there equivalent for Mexican heritage? Do you know of a park or museum that is representative of Mexican heritage in Phoenix?

## Golden Gate Community

Are you familiar with the Golden Gate Community in Southeastern Phoenix?

Its often described as a Mexican American neighborhood and people have argued that it has been dismantled and destroyed. Do you think this has happened to this community?

Who is doing this to this community and other communities like it?

Do you think gentrification is a problem in Phoenix?

What do you think this has done to Mexican American community?

## Neighborhood

What is the largest street intersection near your house? (main thoroughfares)

Do the houses in your neighborhood all look like they were built in the same time period?

Would you say that the homes in your neighborhood would all cost approximately the same amount of money? (of course not all homes are necessarily worth the same but I mean this in a general sense)

Do you live in a “subdivision”? (this is a phrase used by builders to describe a block or unit of homes they built or are building)

Does your neighborhood have a home owners association (HOA)?

If yes, do you know anyone on the board? What is the race of the people on the board of the Home Owners Association? How much are the HOA dues?

What would you change about your neighborhood?

What would you keep the same?

If you were to move would you choose a neighborhood similar to the one you live in now? Why or Why not?

Based on your experience, what would you say is the most common racial group that lives in your neighborhood? How do you feel about this? Do you like that it is majority this group? Why or Why not?

Do you like your neighborhood? Do you like your neighbors?

How often do you interact with your neighbors? Are they your friends? Based on your experience what race(s) are your immediate neighbors?

## General Questions about the city space

Is there a side of town you would prefer to live in?

Is there a side of town you would never live in?

Do you think Phoenix is a multicultural city? Why? What does multicultural mean to you? Do you think this multiculturalism is “sincere”?

## Immigration and Immigration Legislation

How do you feel about immigration from Mexico?

Do you think that the US treats immigrants fairly?

If you owned a business would you employ immigrants?

Would you employ immigrants as domestic workers?

Do you think there are stereotypes about immigrants? What might they be?

Do you think there are any middleclass immigrants coming to the United States?

Are you familiar with the anti-immigration legislation passed in Arizona? (Particularly SB1070)

SB 1070 is a bill that attempts to curb immigration into Arizona. Specifically it enables law enforcement to ask anyone for proof of citizenship at their discretion

How do you feel about SB 1070?

It has been called racist by many people, do you think it is racist?

Do you think that skin tone is a factor in understanding who falls under the reach of this bill?

Do you think you could fall under its legislation? By this I mean, do you think you might be suspected of being an “illegal immigrant”? Why or Why not?

There has been a large amount of people protesting SB1070 do you think that these protests are important?

Based on your experiences do you feel as though the Anglo population as a whole supports this Bill?

Have you talked to your Anglo friends/colleagues/coworkers about SB 1070?

Have you talked to any (other) pro-SB1070 people

Why do you think they support this bill or its ideas?

How did these conversations about this bill make you feel?

Do you think you or any other Middleclass Mexican Americans have anything to gain from the passage of this Bill?

Do you think that being middleclass will lessen the impact a bill such as this will have on you?

## Cultural Practices

What do you think of when you think of Mexican American culture?

Do you feel as though there are specific things you do that tie you to Mexican American culture?

Do you listen to Spanish Language music? Which kind?

Do you feel this music is important to your Mexican American heritage?

Do you often cook or eat Mexican food? What is your favorite dish? Why?

How did you learn to prepare Mexican food? Who taught you?

Why do you think this person taught you to prepare food?

Was this person significant in your understanding of your Mexican Americanness?

Do you have a favorite Mexican restaurant in the city? Where is it located? Is it near your house? If it isn't do you go to one near your house? Is it in a stripmall or is it a free standing building?

Do you own anything that you feel signifies your Mexican American heritage? Why does it do this? Can't just anyone own this and feel the same way?

Parental Relationships

How do your parents identify in terms of their race?

Why do you think they identified this way?

Do you feel as though the way they talk think about their race impacts yours?

Do you think differently than your parents?

For those with Children

Do you feel it is important for you children to recognize their Mexican American cultural ancestry?

Are there things you do to help them maintain this understanding of their identity?

Are there things they do to maintain this ancestry?

How important is this ancestry to your children?

(If you have children or if you hypothetically have them) Would you prefer your children to be romantically involved with someone who is of Mexican American Ancestry?

Are there other factors that you feel might be more important in their choice of romantic partner(s)?

Wrap up questions

Do you feel that being Mexican American has significant advantages or disadvantages? Why?

Was there anyone else you can think impacted the way you think about yourself as a Mexican American? (Ask questions about MA heroes or idols or mentors etc...)

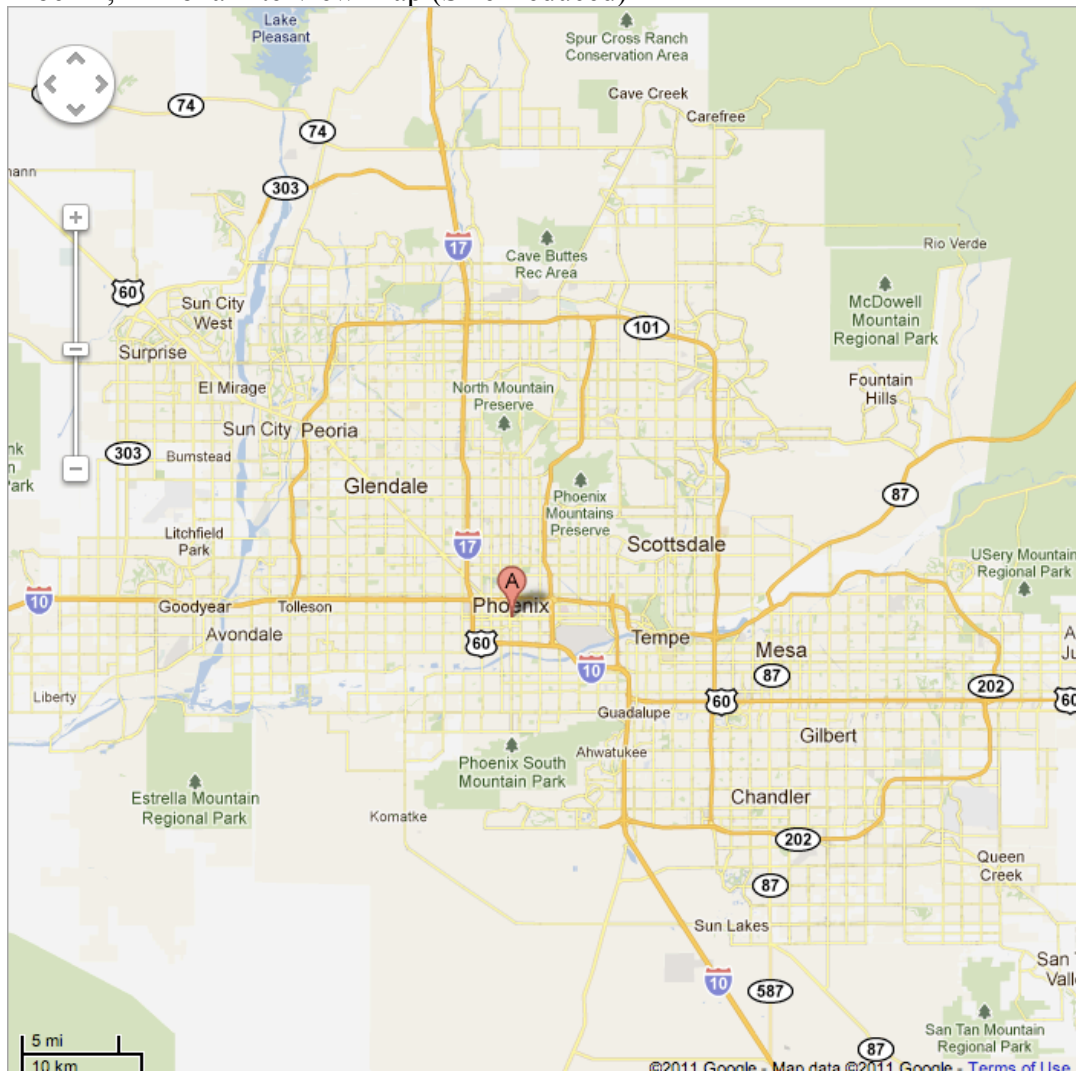
Is there any advice you would give to Mexican Americans who are younger than you who are going to school, starting their own business or generally trying to achieve middleclass status?

What were your reasons for participating in this interview?

## APPENDIX IV

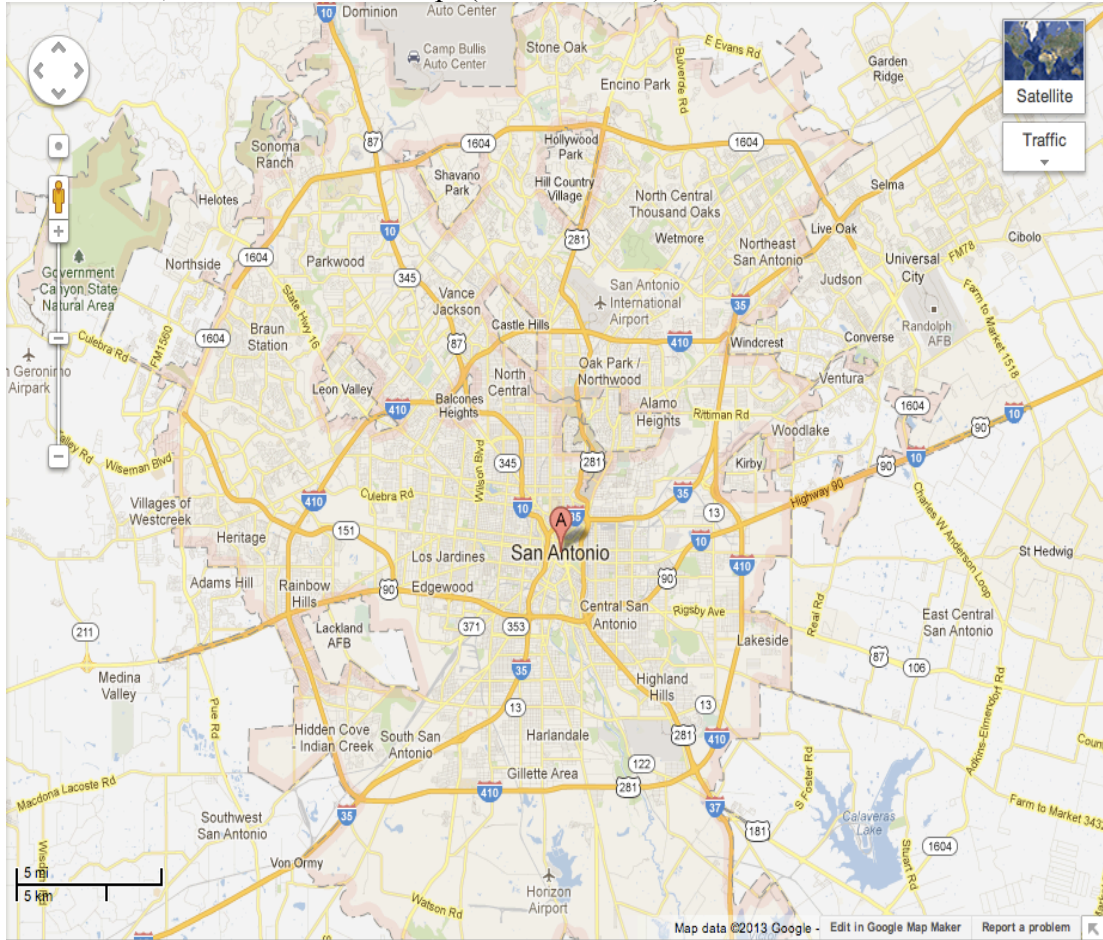
### Interview Maps

#### Phoenix, Arizona Interview Map (Size Reduced)



Google Maps - ©2011 Google

# San Antonio, Texas Interview Map (Size Reduced)



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