RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES AMONG MEXICAN-WHITE COUPLES IN

TEXAS

A Dissertation

by

JENNIFER CASSANDRA GUILLEN

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Chair of Committee,	Sarah N. Gatson
Co-Chair of Committee,	Rogelio Sáenz
Committee Members,	Jane Sell
	Marco Portales
Head of Department,	Jane Sell

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the complexities of racial and ethnic identification Mexicans in romantic relationships with whites in four locations: Brazos County, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston. Using data from 90 in-depth, semi-structured and open-ended interviews with 50 couples I examine racial and ethnic self-identification among Mexican partners, the racial and ethnic self-identification of white partners, and how white partners perceive the racial and ethnic identities of Mexican partners.

Findings show that the racial identity of partners of Mexican descent fluctuate depending on the social and geographical space, supporting and adding to Sáenz and Aguirre's (1990) research. Furthermore, fluctuations in racial identity among Mexican partners showed that these identities operate in different ways. For the purpose of this research, I was primarily interested in the use of "Hispanic" given its history as an imposed identity. Thus, I examine not just how identity is adopted but why, examining the use of "Hispanic" as an identificational last resort given the lack of fit in other categories; the power of using "Hispanic" as both an exclusionary label and as a semi-inclusionary tool; as well as the resistance to it.

Secondly, data on white ethnic identity showed that increasingly whites are moving beyond selectively adopting ethnicity as symbolic and adopting "white". Data from this research concludes that this is a discursive tactic employed by whites to retain white supremacy. Additionally, I examine how some white partners develop a racial

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awareness about themselves and their familial environments, developing a sense of racial literacy. In doing so, these whites strive for antiracist practices as a form of resistance.

Lastly, the analysis of data from this dissertation finds that whites, in particular men, employ coercion and their relative power in their relationships and marriages to determine the meaning of the situation or the identity of their partners. Thus, whites impose the identity of "Hispanic" on their partners even when these do not identify as such. These are important coercive tactics given that romantic space is generally considered the most loving and safe space. Therefore, these findings prove otherwise, that romantic space is actually one of the most coercive spaces.

DEDICATION

Para mi madre, Ann Cyphers. Eres mi todo.

Dedico esta obra a todas las generaciones de mi familia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is probably the most important section of this dissertation. It is because of those who have surrounded me with their love, support, and advice that I have become the scholar and person who I am today. Without those who have advised, cheered, laughed with me and at me, and mentored me during this graduate school process this would have never been possible. This is for all of you.

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tacos, the laughter, the support, the advice, and love that you have given me since I came to A&M during recruitment weekend (even when I went through that brief "shy" stage during recruitment that you love telling people about). You are and always will be the glue that binds this department. Marco, gracias por todo su apoyo, presencia. cariño y sugerencias. Ha sido un gustazo conocerlo y a su familia durante estos últimos años.

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under your wing, to check up on me, to give advice and support, to trust me with your

lives and with your work speaks to how strong of a relationship I have with you, you are

both inspirational and amazing women and I love you so much and am thankful every

day for your love and friendship.

To all the friends I have made both in graduate school and in life, thank you for

sticking around and for thinking of me when I haven't even had a chance to think about

anyone else. I appreciate all of you and send you love and luck wherever you may be.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge and thank my family. Sobretodo quisiera

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The development of this project is deeply rooted in my own experiences and

those I observed with my family, both as the daughter of a Mexican and white couple

located in Mexico City, Mexico, and as a woman who strongly identifies as Mexican in a

romantic partnership with a white man in Texas. The project began with the first

relationship as the central influence as I thought of how identity functioned in multiple

contexts and as I reflected on *why*, *when* and *where* people chose or adopted certain

identities. I remember my own identity existing in a very liminal space, an existence

that often fluctuated between worlds, but never quite fitting entirely in either. More

importantly, as I got older my identity became increasingly more strongly solidified as

Mexican with an understanding that my own identity was not always dependent on how

I identified, but rather who I came in contact with and what the particular social

conventions of that interaction required (a superficial social acknowledgment between

people, for example in a marketplace, or conversations in a more in-depth and developed

friendship).

As I thought more about identity, with my own identity development at the

forefront, I thought of my parents and how my identity and theirs were all grounded and

influenced by the contexts under which they were situated, and how these influenced the

identity formation process. Although I consider myself a social constructionist – that is,

I reject biological definitions of race – there is thus far an inextricable link between

phenotype and how race is constructed. This has long been the foundation upon which I

reflected on the phenotypical characteristics of my family and myself, and how others

both in the U.S. and Mexico perceive us because of these characteristics. In examining

these characteristics, I found that they vary by individual – my mom is a fair-skinned,

white woman from Lewistown, Illinois; my biological dad is a medium-dark-skinned

man from San Luis Acatlán, Guerrero[1]; my mother's partner, who I consider to be my

fatherly figure, is also medium-dark in complexion, of Zapotec[2] descent who originates

from the state of Oaxaca[3] but who has resided for most of his life in the state of

Veracruz[4]; my brother is light-medium skinned man who has resided the majority of his

life in Mexico City with my white mother; and, finally, my own complexion is very fair

and I am often considered white instead of Mexican in both the U.S. and Mexico[5].

Figure 1 below is a palette designed with eleven skin tones that Telles and Steele (2012)

used for interviewers to identify respondents' skin color and for respondents to self-

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[1] A small town in the Costa Chica, an area primarily known for being one of two areas in Mexico known for its Afromexican population.

[2] The Zapotec are a pre-Hispanic indigenous group still in existence that was once considered one of the most important Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican civilizations.

[3] A state in Mexico located on the southwestern coast.

[4] A state in Mexico located on the southeastern coast. The proximity between Oaxaca and Veracruz is not very large considering they both lie in the Tehuantepec Isthmus.

[5] The infamous "Pinturas de castas" were an artistic phenomenon that emerged in New Spain in the 18th century that visually documented the phenotypes and the positions in the racial hierarchy of children with parents of different racial configurations. These were also a way of documenting the skin color spectrum that emerged as a result of racial mixing. Depending on the region where these were produced, these painting varied in the their depictions and the labels used to identify the different racial configurations. Some also included additional information that clued viewers into gendered, classed and raced practices such as food consumption, behavioral and personality traits, occupation, and fashion.

identify their perceptions of their skin color as part of a study on the relationship

between skin color and educational attainment among Latin@s. Using this spectrum, I

would classify my mother as a 3; my father as an 8; my stepdad as an 8; my brother as a

5; and, myself as a 4.

Figure 1. Skin Color Palette Used in the 2010 AmericasBarometer

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
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9	
10	
11	

Source: Telles and Steele (2012)

Our experiences, both individual and collective, in Mexico and the U.S., reflect

how race and ethnicity operate and how they organize societies in different ways. These

experiences, and in particular those I have experienced firsthand with my own identity

and my family's, are largely the inspiration for this project. Below are a few of my

common experiences with identity both in Mexico and in the United States:

- I have had one memory seared into my brain since I was very young. My mom, the white American woman living in Mexico City since 1972, who I generally spoke English with all the time, once said to me, "When we are out in public do not speak English. People already think of us as American and we don't want them to [a common perception, and one held by my mom, is that if you are a foreigner, especially American, in Mexico you are more likely to be viewed as a tourist or being wealthy, both of which makes you more of a target for robbery and kidnap]." Phenotypically I already pass as white in both Mexico and the U.S., but in Mexico the perceptions of whiteness are also deeply rooted in the association of whiteness with a higher socioeconomic class status, which often creates perceived class tensions or perceived ideas of safety for those in, or perceived to be in, higher socioeconomic strata.

- Growing up in Mexico one of my favorite weekend activities was going to the street markets both in and out of tourist locations. Often, if not most of the time, the street vendors would always yell out, "Güera, pasele, pasele" (translation: "Blondie [a term used also used to refer to people who have light-colored skin], come on in, come on in".) and I would repeatedly find myself engaging in conversations in Spanish claiming my "Mexicanness" and disputing any perceptions of being American or European). Or, in similar situations, street vendors would engage me in English because their perceptions of my skin color placed me in the category of tourist, foreigner, and, again, American or European.

- On a trip to the East Coast with one of my best friends from high school we went to the Boston Aquarium. My friend and I were looking at the starfish and two Afrolatinos who worked for the aquarium started speaking in Spanish to one another about their sexual activities the night before. My friend and I could not hold back our laughter because the conversation was so ridiculous and as they noticed our laughter they asked us, "Do you speak Spanish?" to which I responded, "Yes, we're from Mexico." The two men took a long hard look at us and said, "So, are you from Albuquerque?" This question is one that I frequently encounter and which has always bothered me because of the collective erasure of the existence of Mexico as well as the implications of what it means to be from Mexico. Further into our conversation and as we revealed that we were from Mexico the country not New Mexico the state, we also encountered another one of my favorite conversations: the "You don't look Mexican" and "You speak English so well" (without them acknowledging or reflecting on how they, as Afrolatinos, also spoke both English and Spanish perfectly and were reproducing racialized notions of what it means to be a Latin@). In this moment, we realized

the racialized framing of our interaction—because of our light skin we were perceived as "white Americans" instead of Latinas or mixed race individuals (hence, speaking in Spanish so freely in front of us) and when we engaged in conversation to clarify where we were from, we were faced with the perceptions of what it means to be Mexican (the common perception being of someone with darker skin who speaks with a thick accent in English).

- On this same trip to the East Coast with my friend, I also encountered more racialized comments on what it meant to be Mexican. During a night out at the New Jersey shore, my friend and I met up with some of her family's friends from the area. After introductions and hellos, the first comments we heard were, "So, do you ride a burro to school?" "Do you take siestas after drinking tequila all day?" among others. When I confronted the white men and women who we were surrounded by about these comments, their responses were "But, that's how it is in Mexico, right?" "Stereotypes exist for a reason" and "You're being too sensitive, it's just a joke, you're not even Mexican." When I clarified that I was Mexican and that it did affect me I realized that I was facing a situation in which I was perceived as white (thus, it was acceptable for them to engage me in their backstage racism (Picca and Feagin 2007)) and even when I did claim Mexicanness, was still dismissed as "too sensitive."

- My freshman year at the University of Illinois I frequently met a lot of new people on the porch of my dorm when I would go smoke cigarettes. On one of these occasions I met two white women from Chicago with whom I had a long conversation. After asking each other what our majors were and what classes we were taking we moved onto other formalities, the "where are you from?" questions. When I replied that I was from Mexico City, Mexico, one of the women said to me, "Well, you don't look Mexican, where are your parents from?" to which I said, "My dad is from a rural area in Mexico and my mom is from a rural area here in Illinois." They responded, "Oh, you're biracial" in a disappointed and disapproving tone, which was my first ever encounter with my racial and ethnic identities as they are conceived in the U.S. Since then, I have interrogated identity as it is thought of here in the U.S., which is probably also one of the main factors influencing the sociological work that I do, including this dissertation.

- Lastly, I am heavily involved with the immigrant community in the Brazos County area both as a volunteer and member of Brazos Interfaith Immigration Network (BIIN) and because my partner's father and stepmother live in a predominantly Mexican area of Bryan. At BIIN when I am helping clients with their needs there is a sense of rejection from the immigrants as they enter a space they thought was safe and find themselves in front of a white woman (there is a lot of fear of whites among the immigrant community in Brazos County because of the countless racist acts against them politically, at work, and in personal

interactions). Once I speak Spanish and I introduce myself and tell them a little more about myself, you can physically tell they are relieved and gain a sense of trust towards me.   With my partner's family, the many guests who come through their doors during cookouts or families often greet me in English and are shocked when I speak in Spanish, often telling me that they thought I was a "bolilla" (white woman). My partner's stepmom has even said that when she first met me she did not speak much with me because she thought I was a "bolilla" too. Had I not interjected in Spanish in a conversation she and her husband were having, she would have dismissed me as a white woman.

Additionally, I always thought of myself as a bicultural individual who navigates racial identity in different social contexts. In Mexico, I am frequently seen as a "*güera*" (a term referencing light-skin and blond hair, often associated with being a foreigner, whether American or European[6]) and navigate justifying my own identity with that which others impose on me, especially in establishing myself as Mexican. In the U.S., people are often confused when I say I am Mexican, often thinking I am referring to New Mexico or making comments such as, "But, you don't look Mexican" and "You speak perfect English." While both my racial and cultural experiences of reflection and navigation reflect how race and ethnicity operate differently in each cultural context, they are both deeply rooted in a long history of white supremacy in both Mexico and in the U.S. This chapter will discuss the research questions guiding this project; the scholarly background of this study; the historical racial ideologies of the United States, Mexico, and the combination of these from both countries as they manifested in Texas,

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[6] In Mexico, being American, European, or even just light-skinned is generally associated with a middle or upper class status, and, while many of Mexico's social problems are generally identified as class-based, there is an undeniable link between race/ethnicity and class that is often not discussed. Discussions of race/ethnicity, when they do occur, generally center on the Mexican *mestizo* or regarding the existence of and treatment of indigenous populations.

where the research for this project took place; and, lastly, I will outline the organization

of this dissertation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary question this research attempts to address is: *How are Mexicans, in*

romantic relationships with whites, racialized through their own self-identification and

through the imposition of racial identities by their partners? Additionally, there are

many other questions that arise from this most basic organizing question. They include

the following sub-questions relevant to the this project:

- How are the racial and ethnic identities of whites in these relationships also affected by interracial/interethnic romantic relationships?
- How are Mexican and white women characterized within racial ideologies? Specifically, ho are they each racialized and treated with regards to their gender?
- How are Mexican and white men characterized within racial ideologies? Specifically, how are they each racialized and treated with regards to their gender?
- What is the role of class status in how individuals self-identify and how their partners see them?

BACKGROUND

Although much research has contributed to a greater understanding of racial

formation and racial identity among individuals – for example, in studies showing how

individuals produce, reproduce, or modify their identities within their own contexts

(Alba 1990; Nagel 2001; Rockquemore and Brusnma 2008; Waters 1990, 2000) – not

much research is available about racial and ethnic identities among individuals in

interracial couples. As a result, this dissertation project focuses on contributing to the

body of research on ethnic and racial identity formation by examining the ways in which

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Latin@[7]-white[8] couples navigate their individual identities and their partner's identity in

a racially and ethnically stratified society. Specifically, this research examines the

particularities of identity among Mexicans and whites in heterosexual romantic

relationships in four key locations in Texas: Brazos County, San Antonio, Austin, and

Houston. Figures 2-6 below show racial distributions in general of the four areas

examined (Figure 2), and by specific location (Figure 3 – Brazos County [Bryan/College

Station]; Figure 4 – San Antonio; Figure 5 – Austin; Figure 6 – Houston).

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[7] For the purpose of this study, "Latin@" will be used to identify individuals of Latin
American descent. Specifically, "Latin@" is used to signify "that moment of
crystallization in the colonial relation between, not Spain and Latin America, but the
U.S. and Latin America… one can only adequately understand the contemporary social
locations of Latinos 'in relation to the historical-structural dynamics [which have made
them] racialized colonial subjects of the U.S. empire' (Grosfoguel and Georas 2001:98),
and not in relation to their historical ties to the colonialism of Spain" (Alcoff 2005:402).
Furthermore, the term "Hispanic" will not be used (unless directly utilized by research
respondents) because although "Latin@" and "Hispanic" have been chosen in the past
by a variety of Latin American communities, "Hispanic" is a term that has been
historically imposed on people of Latin American descent. Particularly, "Hispanic" was
a term instituted by the U.S. government after the Immigration and Nationality Act of
1965 ended quotas on immigration from South and Central America; in order to name
the incoming immigrant populations, the Federal Office of Management and Budget
instituted "Hispanic" at the suggestion of the king of Spain for all those "whose 'culture
of origin' is Spanish, 'regardless of race'" (Toro 1998:265). Additionally, the term
"Hispanic" was defined as a non-racialized ethnicity, thus supporting the idea that race is
based on biological traits; that the racial hierarchy in the United States is composed of
four races (white, black, Asian, Native American/American Indian) and that "Hispanics"
are either white or black; and, that any mixtures continue to fall into the four existing
racial categories.
[8] For the purpose of this project, "white" will be used to identify individuals of Anglo,
Caucasian and European descent, both citizens and non-citizen immigrants, who are not
black, Native American/American Indian, Asian, or of Latin American descent.
Specifically, "white" emerged as a panethnic category used to merge various European
ethnic – and in some cases previously racialized – populations into one single race with
the intention of distinguishing them from people who were not their equals legally,
politically, economically and socially (Jay 1998).

Figure 2. Racial Dot Map of All Four Locations

2010 Census Block Data

1 Dot = 1 Person

- ● White
- ● Black
- ● Asian
- ● Hispanic
- ● Other Race / Native American / Multi-racial

Image Copyright, 2013, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia (Dustin A. Cable, creator
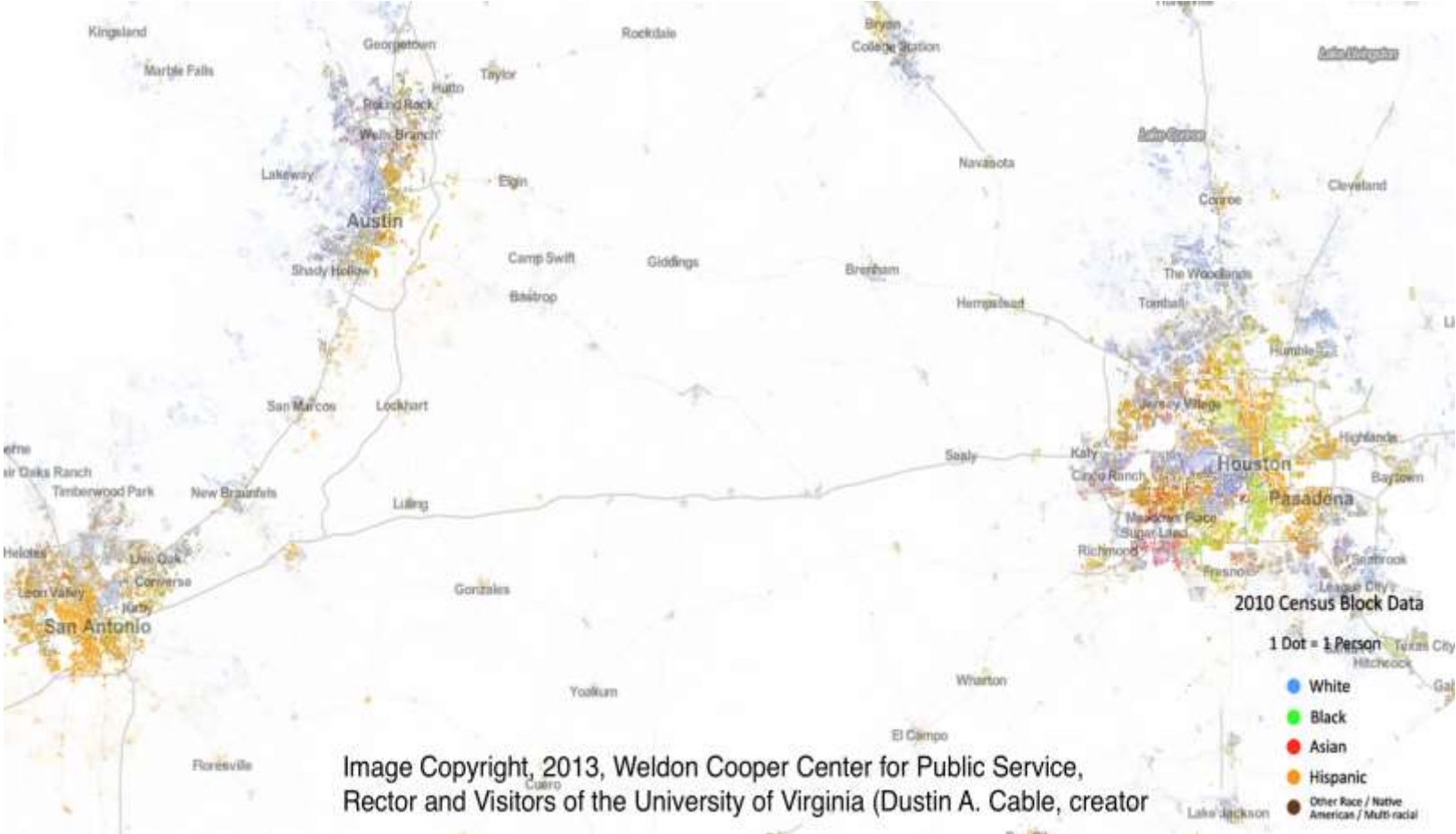
Figure 3. Racial Dot Map, Brazos County, Texas
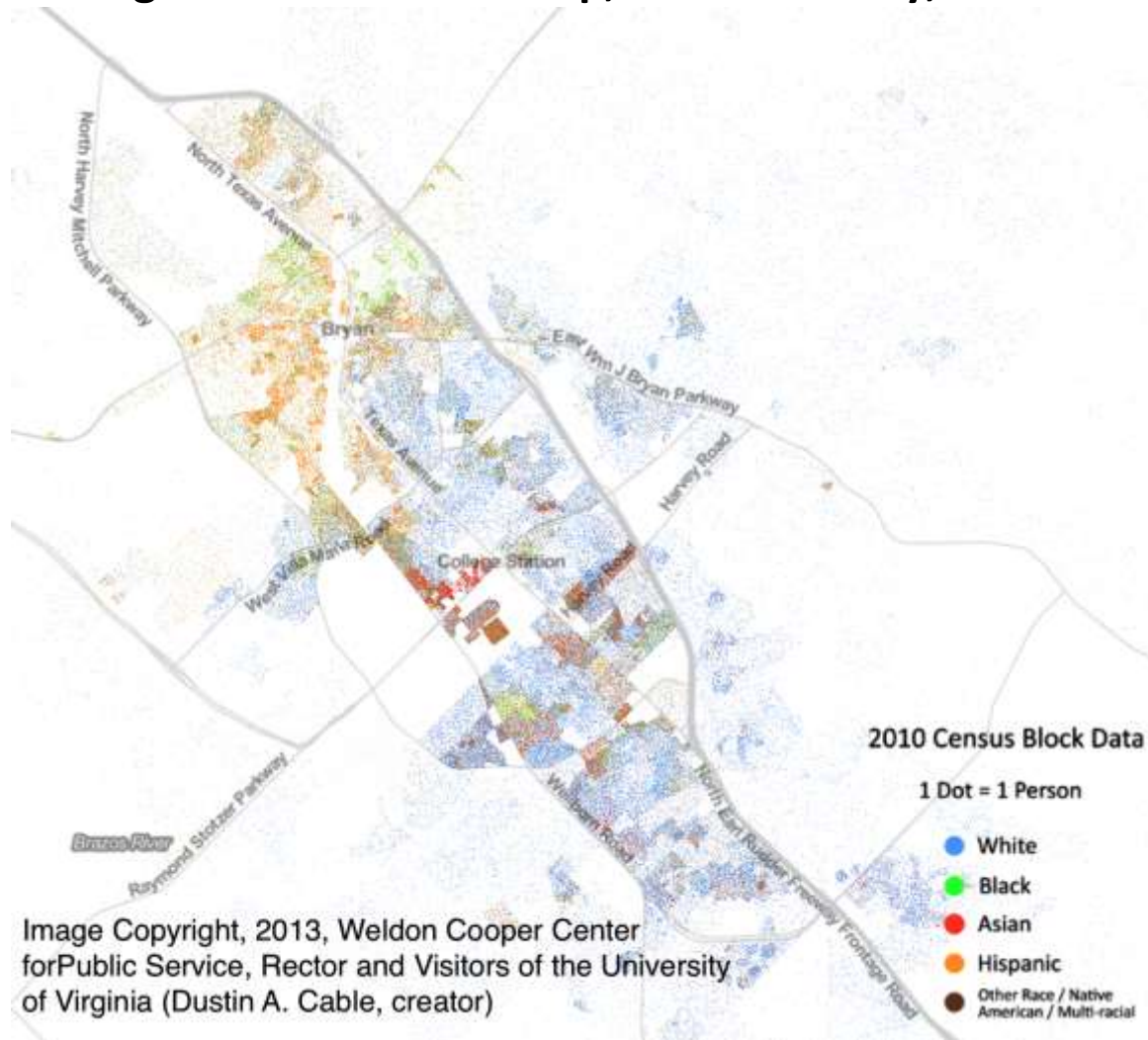
2010 Census Block Data

1 Dot = 1 Person

- White
- Black
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other Race / Native American / Multi-racial

Image Copyright, 2013, Weldon Cooper Center forPublic Service, Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia (Dustin A. Cable, creator)

Figure 4. Racial Dot Map San Antonio, Texas
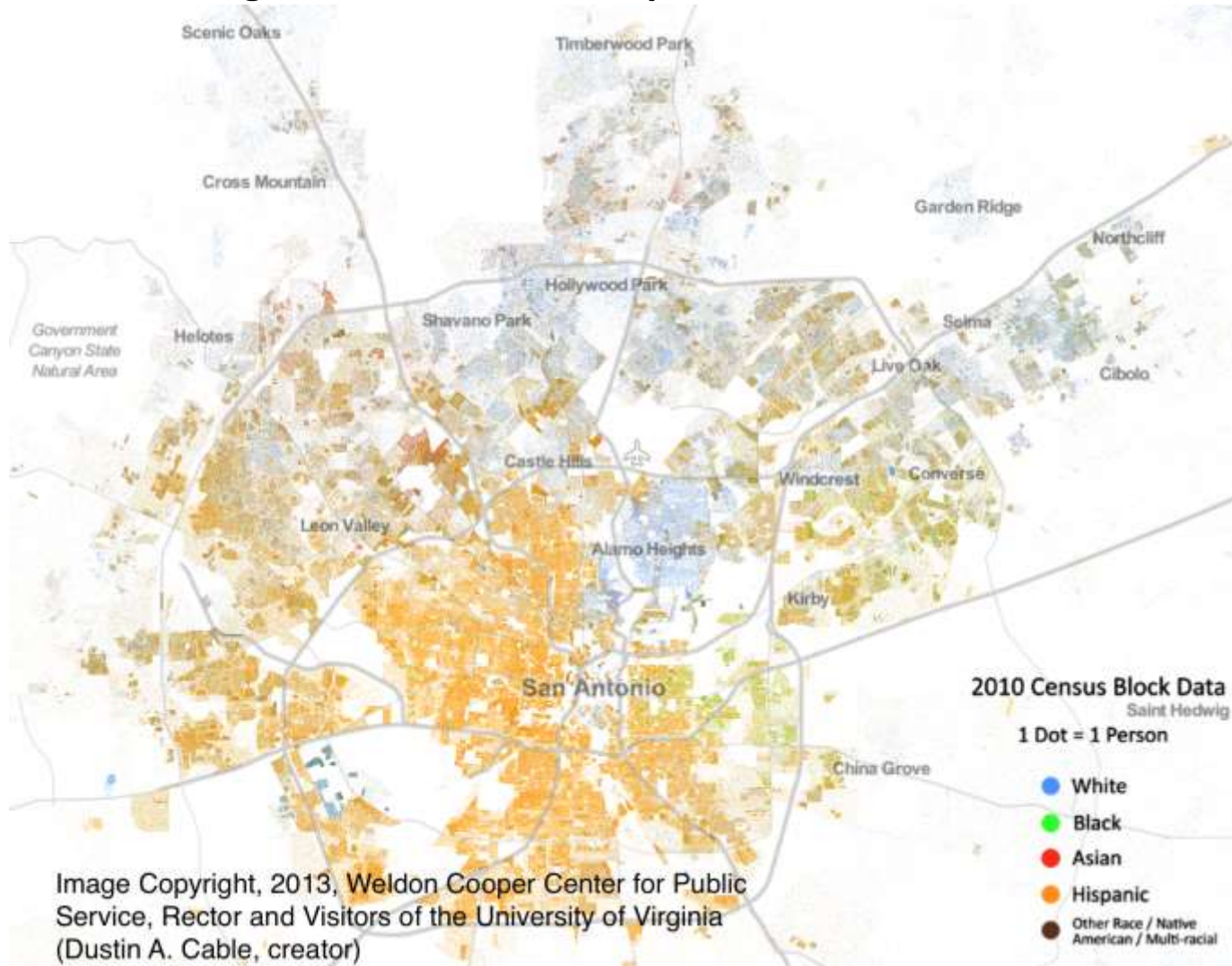
Figure 5. Racial Dot Map Austin, Texas

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2010 Census Block Data

1 Dot = 1 Person

- White
- Black
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other Race / Native American / Multi-racial

What am I looking at...?
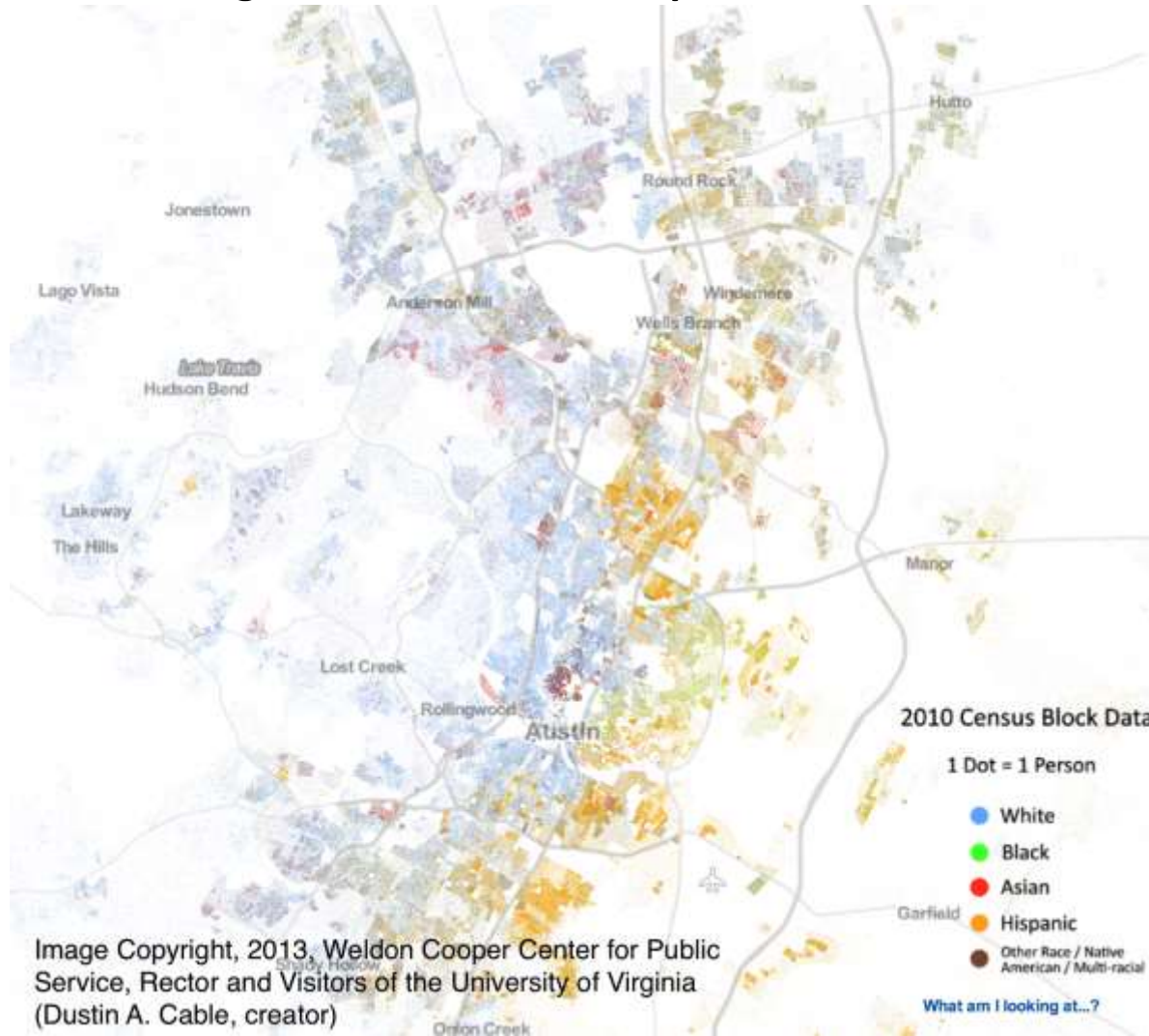
Figure 6. Racial Dot Map Houston, Texas

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Service, Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia
(Dustin A. Cable, creator)

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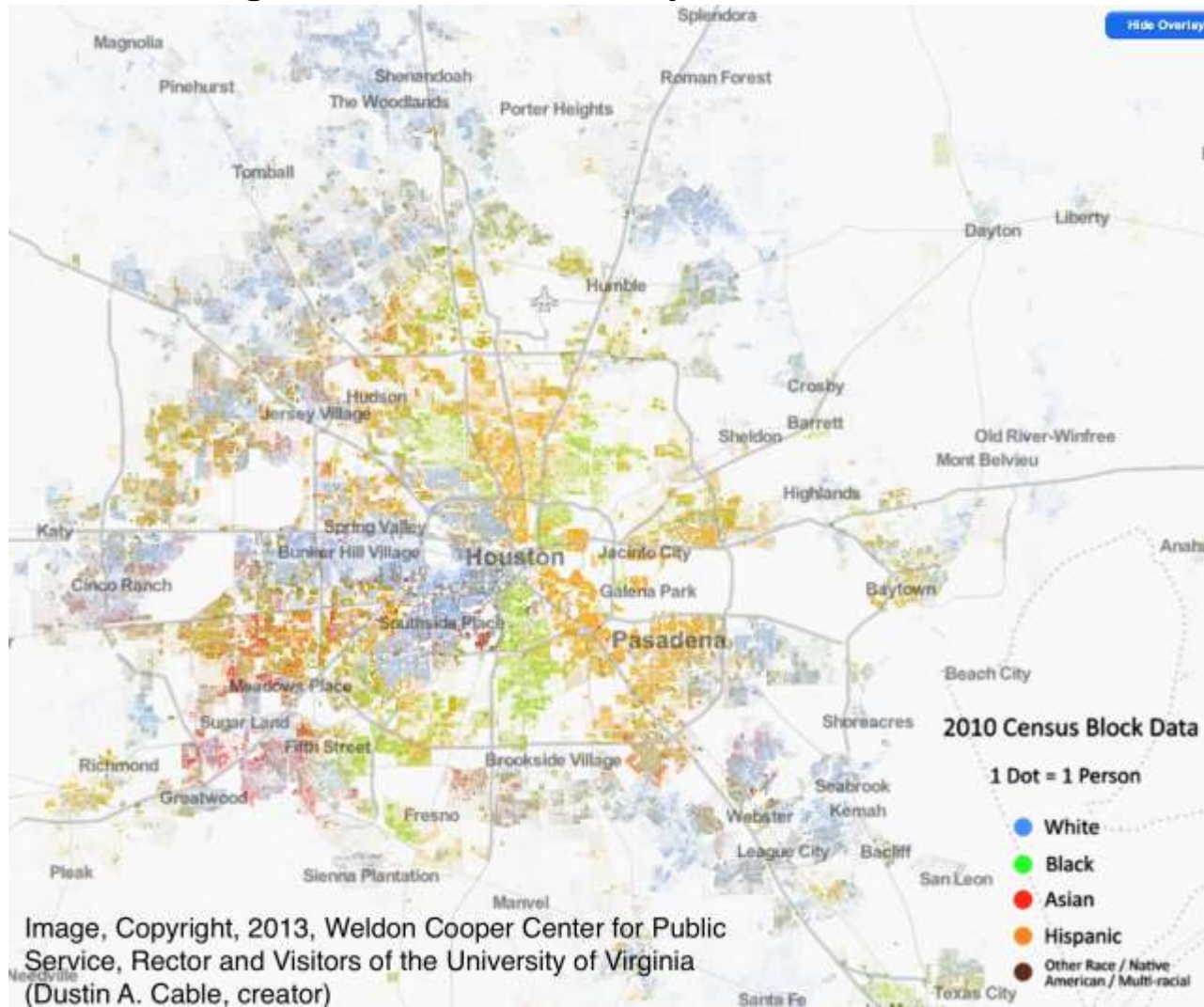
In speaking of heterosexual interracial relationships it is first necessary to position this work within the studies of race and racism. First, I reject any biological definitions of race, such as those defining race as a "category of persons who are related by common heredity or ancestry and who are perceived and responded to in terms of external features or traits (Wilkinsons 1987:185). More specifically, this research utilizes a constructionist approach, arguing that racial and ethnic identities are dynamic and formed through both an internal process of self-identification and external classification by others (Cornell and Hartmann 1997; Nagel 1994; Omi and Winant 1994). However, although I reject the biological definitions of race and adopt a social constructionist approach, it must be noted that the biological definitions of race also function within the realm of social construction. As Audrey Smedly (1993) notes, "race is a sociocultural phenomenon that is not conceptually separable from biophysical variation" (p.7). Although race is historically grounded and deeply embedded in our economic, political, and social institutions, it is a cultural invention "consciously thought to create social stratification based on visible differences [Banton 1967, 1977, 1988]" (Smedley 1993:22). Thus, we cannot separate biological/phenotypical definitions of race from social constructionist definitions.

The conceptualizations of race and ethnicity among Latin@s living in the United States have endured various shifts and redefinitions throughout the course of history, which have overlapped across space, time, and geographical location. These overlaps often mean that Latin@s living in the United States must navigate more than one

historical root of racialization, stemming from their Spanish and Anglo[9] backgrounds.

In other words, Latin@s in the United States live with and carry with them these (at

least) two histories of white supremacy. Taking this into consideration and in order to

situate Latin@ racial and ethnic identity within the context of their presence in the

United States, these two histories of white supremacy warrant discussion.

HISTORICAL RACE IDEOLOGIES

The Development of Racial and Ethnic Identities in Spanish Colonial America

During the fifteenth century, the indigenous people of the Americas faced the

disruptions of social order with the arrival of Christopher Columbus and his exploration

fleets. The Spanish intended to invade and occupy the newly discovered territories,

regardless of the inhabitation of these lands by indigenous populations. This

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[9] In the context of Texas, Anglo (short for Anglo American) is commonly used to refer to white Americans who are not of Hispanic or Latin@ origin and sometimes those who are not of French origin. However, the term "Anglo" is based on "Anglo Saxon" which generally refers to the people who inhabited Great Britain and included people of Germanic tribes who migrated to the southern part of Great Britain from continental Europe (including Norwegians, Swiss, Swedes, Danes, Icelanders, Germans, Austrians, English, Dutch, Afrikaners, Flemish, Frisians and others (Minahan 2000; Pavlovic 2007). According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a), the largest self-reported white ancestry groups in the U.S. are German (10.9%), Irish (7.1%), and English (5.8%). In Texas, these same white ethnic groups are the majority with similar percentages (German, 10.6%; Irish 7.5%; English 6.8%) (U.S. Census Bureau 2012b). This indicates that although "Anglo" is commonly used in Texas to refer to people of European, non-Hispanic or Latin@ descent, it is representative of an oversaturation of the white category where people who are by definition of "Anglo-Saxon" not considered Anglo are subsumed under that category (e.g., people of Irish descent, the second largest white ethnic group in both the U.S. and Texas).

Conquista[10] permitted the establishment of colonial regimes in the Americas via forced cultural assimilation and submission to colonial powers. In return, the European colonizers secured material goods critical to the development of capitalism in the Netherlands, Great Britain, and France. Culturally, the conquest and colonization of America imposed European ideals such as language (mostly Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French), writing, mercantilist economic systems, and religious conversion to Christianity.

Additionally, unlike the English colonizers who officially opposed interracial sex and the subsequent reproduction[11] of races as a means of maintaining racial purity, the Spanish Crown welcomed racial mixture and viewed it as an opportunity to expand the Spanish Empire[12]. In 1501, the Spanish monarch explicitly promoted intermarriage in the colonies in an effort to increase the Spanish presence in the colonies. In 1503, the monarchy instructed the governor to see that "some Christians [i.e., Spaniards] marry some Indian women and some Christian women marry some Indian men, so that both

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[10] *Conquista* refers to the conquest of America, often described as the process of exploration, conquest, and settlement in the New World by Spain and Portugal (and later other European nations) in the 16th century, following the "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492.

[11] Interracial sex and reproduction is usually referred to as "miscegenation." For the purposes of this research, "miscegenation" is not used because of the problems stemming from its use. Kaplan (1949), for example, documented the emergence of this terminology, a made up word consisting of *miscere* (Latin for "to mix") and *genus* (Latin for "race"), as a means of providing pamphlets with unfounded "scientific" evidence about racial mixture in response to Lincoln's reelection campaign in 1864.

[12] Racial mixture was also permissible in North America in cases that expanded the American empire; for example, the marriage of white European colonists to Native American women was a strategy implanted by colonizers that ensured the acquisition of property, or the expansion of slave property through birth.

parties can communicate and teach each other and the Indians become men and women of reason" (Mörner 1967:26). While legally implemented, enforcement of this policy proved difficult—censuses taken in the colonies reveal that the Spanish did not favor legal marriage to the indigenous population (Martínez 2011). In particular, the Spanish colonists disfavored the marital unions between Spanish men and indigenous women with children born out of the union. A legal marriage for these couples would legitimate the children as Spanish citizens and legal heirs to their Spanish parent's assets. Instead, Spanish colonizers preferred to keep indigenous women as concubines until Spanish women of all social strata, including prostitutes, became available for marriage (Mörner 1967). Moreover, although the Spanish Crown legally and officially approved of these marriages, socially, the indigenous population's low status on the racial and social strata deemed them inadequate for official inclusion into Spanish society. In addition, the continuous interactions with the Spanish contributed to the socialization of the indigenous population, in particular women, in believing in their inferiority to the lighter-skinned Europeans. Chronicles of the time narrate stories of indigenous girls trying to bleach their skin or hoping for the acceptance of children born out of formal or informal unions with the Spanish/whites as free Spaniards (Salas 1960).

In the Spanish colonies, "Spaniards" and "Indians" made up the categories of racial stratification. "Spaniard" included Peninsular Spaniards[13], *criollos*[14], and

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[13] During the time of the Spanish colony, Peninsular Spanish referred to individuals born in Spain.
[14] *Criollo* refers to the children of Spanish parents born in the colonies.

legitimate *mestizos*[15]. The Spanish Crown issued decrees naming "Indians" as free

subjects and unofficially placed them on equally footing with the lower stratum of

Spanish society. Despite this decree, indigenous authorities governed on their own land

while the Spanish ultimately supervised them and limited their liberties. Additionally, in

the early- to mid-1500s, with the introduction of African slaves to the Americas, a third

category of citizen emerged in Spanish colonial society. Through subdivisions within

the Spanish racial category, racial mixing, interracial sex and reproduction, and the

introduction of slaves into the Spanish colonies, the Spanish established a intricate caste

system grounded in race and used for social control, including the determination of an

individual's importance in society (Acuña 2011). People of mixed race, were

collectively referred to as "castas" (Acuña 2011; Meyer et al., 1999), which consisted of

all possible racial combinations. In the 17th century, the *pinturas de casta*[16] documented

and labeled the different *castas* (castes) as a way of identifying people from specific

racial or ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, these *pinturas de casta* determined the social

status of each specific *casta*. By the end of the colonial period there were over one

hundred categories detailing the possible classifications of mixture in existence (Benson

2003).

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[15] *Mestizo* refers to the children born out of European and Indian parents legitimately recognized by their Spanish parents, usually by the father.
[16] *Pinturas de casta* were caste paintings depicting and naming hundreds of different racial combinations and their social positioning in Spanish society.

Contemporary Ideologies of Racial and Ethnic Identity in Latin America: The Permanence of Colonial Racial Stratification

The legacy of racial categorization and Spanish influence continues in Latin America today. The current national ideologies surrounding race in Latin America focus on racial inclusion and promote racial mixing and racial democracy (Freyre [1933] 1956; Pierson 1942; Tanenbaum [1946] 1992; Twine 1998; Telles 2002). In Latin America, "exclusive racial categories do not exist, although descriptive terms are used to reflect the perception of individuals with varying degrees of admixture of Indian, African, and Spanish (or Portuguese) ancestry" (Smedley and Smedley 2012:7). Additionally, identities in Latin America are much more fluid and dynamic, often shifting easily between Indian and *mestizo* although physical features do not change. Lastly, the ideology in much of Latin America is that lower-status people with black physical characteristics may achieve a higher social status (whitening) through education, wealth, or professional accomplishments (Smedley and Smedley 2012). However, the actual social stratification of Latin American countries like México and Brazil show otherwise – the privileged racial strata is composed of light-skinned or white/European-looking individuals, while black or darker-skinned individuals reside at the bottom (Twine 1998; Telles 2002).

Specific to this research, México's national ideology about racial and ethnic identity centers on the belief that the Mexicans are *mestizos*, a racially mixed group stemming from the mixture of Europeans and the indigenous population, and referential to racial mixing during colonization. During Porfirio Díaz's presidency (1876-1911),

racialized categories were incorporated into the nation-building process and the *mestizo* became Mexico's national symbol. Using social Darwinism and positivism, Díaz's scientists, in an attempt to unify the nation, declared *mestizaje* as the distinguishing factor in Mexican society. José Vasconcelos, philosopher, director of the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM) in 1920, founder of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP; Secretariat of Public Education) in México, and presidential candidate (1929), first explained and popularized this particular ideology of the contemporary *mestizo*. Vasconcelos's development of this ideology emerged as a response to the Eurocentric racism that viewed racial mixing in Latin American countries as a condemnation to third-world status ([1925] 1997). Vasconcelos ([1925] 1997), as opposed to many of his European counterparts, viewed racial mixing as a privilege over purity, predicting the global creation of the *mestizo*. This *mestizo* would become the physical manifestation of the "cosmic race," a new race created from the mixture of blood from all the races in the world (whites, blacks, and Asians). Vasconcelos ([1925] 1997) believed this "cosmic race" to be superior to the already existing races, and thus, transcended the people of the "old world."

The term *mestizo* originally represented a category complementary of that of the indigenous. Originally, and until the mid to late 1500s, *mestizo* meant the offspring of a Spaniard and an indigenous person. However, by the end of the 16th century, it included various mixtures of indigenous and Spanish, especially as indigenous settlement in urban areas increased. Around the 17th century, the term acquired the entire range of social and cultural connotations that it has today; a mixture of indigenous and European, various

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degrees of mixture between indigenous and European, and those who had acquired the

mestizo status via the phenotype (Nutini 1997). *Mestizaje* then is the process of social

transformation where things ("blood," appearance, culture, etc.) previously thought of as

exclusionary, move into an inclusionary status. Thus, a framework emerged where

México, thanks to the ideology of *mestizaje*, became "free" from the cancerous grasp of

racism (Béjar Navarro 1969). Nevertheless, other factors, such as racialized hierarchies,

remain the same and continue pushing towards exclusion (Wade 2010). In this way,

mestizaje has the ability to give an individual social mobility using characteristics that

once were exclusionary (blood quantum, phenotypical appearance, cultural traits).

However, the existing racial framework, which has not undergone any transformation,

continues to place those individuals in a racialized hierarchy unchanged by the alleged

social transformation. Thus, *mestizaje* operates as a "key terrain for the operation of

racism; and, the fact that *mestizaje* often works in zones of intimacy (sex, the family, the

body) means racism looks deep in the heart of people and society, making it different to

both see and resist (Wade, 2009b)" (Wade 2010:94). In addition, since the 1970s,

research has shown that ideologies of racial inclusion perpetuate racial tensions that

prevent racial or ethnic social movements (López and Espíritu 1990), hide racial

disparities and discrimination (Hasenbalg and Huntington 1982; López and Espíritu

1990), allow the permanence of unrestricted prejudice (Mathews 1974; Sagrera 1974),

inhibit the demand for indigenous rights (Hale 1999), and produce feelings of superiority

and exemption from whites (Hasenbalg 1996). For these reasons, researchers believe

that the effects of this Latin American ideology are both towards inclusion, and

exclusion (de la Fuente 2001; Sawyer 2006; Telles 2004; Wade 1993, 1997; Wright 1990).

Despite the glorification and focus on the *mestizo* in México, the unspoken racial hierarchy prevails with whites/Europeans and *mestizos* at the top and the darker-skinned individuals, including Afro-Latin@s and indigenous people, residing at the bottom (Wade 2010). During colonization and until the latter half of the nineteenth century, "*blanco*" (white) was used exclusively as a racial category for individuals of Spanish blood. Since this time, several European groups have also settled throughout México. Additionally, it must be noted that in México, "white" (blanco) does not carry the same meaning as in the United States or other colonial instances, and, in fact, is rarely even used. Instead, the preference is to give whites specific terms denoting nationalities (e.g., Spaniards, Americans [sometimes referred to as *gringos*], etc.) or to allude to their physical and cultural characteristics (e.g., *güeros* [light-skinned], etc.) (Nutini 1997).

Furthermore, the national ideology in Mexico surrounding the lack of racism continues today and is significantly embedded into governmental operations. A clear example of this is reflected in reports submitted to the United Nation's International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), of which México has been a member since 1975. For example, in the 1992 and 1994 yearly reports, México recognizes the marginalization of the indigenous communities and implements policies to eradicate inequality. However, these reports also reflect the following: first, the Mexican government quickly condemns racism in other countries such as South Africa and the United States; however, it does not recognize racism within

its own borders. Second, the evidence provided that México is free from supremacy

groups and racist propaganda reflects a very narrow definition of racism. Finally, the

aforementioned statements are written in a report full of references to the social and

economic marginalization of the indigenous population. However, the Mexican

government justifies these discrepancies by affirming that, "the problems of the

indigenous population in México will never be addressed as issues relating to racial

discrimination, but rather as matters of developmental rights and social and economic

marginalization" (United Nations ICERD 2006). In 2001, as a response to backlash

from the United Nations, the Mexican representative at the ICERD conference, Gilberto

Rincón Gallardo, asserted that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and any other

bigotry represents a severe violation of human rights and that México is firmly

committed to the elimination of these violations. In the 2004 ICERD report, the

Mexican government finally acknowledged the existence of racial discrimination in

México and has declared the government's involvement in taking importance and

decisive steps in the elimination of discrimination in the country. Nonetheless, despite

México's official recognition of racism in the country and its policy initiatives to combat

discrimination, it is unclear as to how these changes have actually affected the national

ideologies.

Texas: American Colonization and Manifest Destiny

In addition to a history of Spanish colonialism, the Mexican population residing

in the United States has also experienced another history of colonialism from white

American settlers. In the early 1800s, Spain and the United States began boundary

disputes regarding Louisiana. The U.S. claimed that the Louisiana territory included

lands west of the Mississippi River extending through West Florida, Alabama,

Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas (Haynes 2010). However, Spain maintained that

Louisiana did not extend beyond the western bank of the Mississippi River (Hämäläinen

2008). In 1819, the Adam-Onís Treaty of Limits (also known as the Transcontinental

Treaty or Purchase of Florida), set the boundaries between Spain and the United States.

With this new delineation, white American merchants like Moses Austin, with the

permission of the Spanish Mexican government, settled in the Texas area because of the

proximity to mercantilistic opportunities in the Gulf Coast (Reséndez 2005). Eventually,

México implemented immigration laws limiting Anglo settlement in México's northern

territories, but to circumvent these, Austin and other Anglos settled Louisiana for fear of

eviction by the Mexican government. Once Anglos felt clear of these threats they

determined that if people did not have papers that documented ownership of their lands

such as titles or grants, that they would be forced to leave. As a result, Mexicans living

in Texas, who had never received documentation from the Mexican government proving

their land ownership, were displaced and Anglos saw this as their opportunity to

continue their expansion across the west (Reséndez 2005).

Moreover, white American colonizers like Austin claimed that their presence in

Mexican territories were part of an initiative to tame the wilderness, settling the lands

with intelligent, honorable, and enterprising people, thus making it a better place

(Reséndez 2005; De León 1983). With the addition of white American settlers in Texas,

three different groups comprised the population of Texas – Anglos, indigenous people, and Mexican Texans or *Tejanos*. Anglos described Mexicans, the indigenous, and *Tejanos* as uncivilized, un-Christian, racially impure mongrels who needed white Americans to tame them and subdue them so they would no longer threaten the progress of white civilization (De León 1983). This racialization and dehumanization of *Tejanos* and the indigenous residents was necessary in order to justify the blatant white racism, the need for whites to try to whiten the new settlement, and, ultimately, the conquest of what is now the American Southwest (De León 1983; Reséndez 2005). Thus, "Americans who immigrated to Texas confronted the native Mexicans with certain preconceptions about their character. Whites believed that the inhabitants of the province had descended from a tradition of paganism, depravity, and primitivism. Mexicans were a type of folk that Americans should avoid becoming" (De León 1983:6).

When México established its independence from Spain, white Americans saw this as an open invitation to settle Texas, which they did by settling predominantly Mexican areas, primarily using violence as a tactic. As a result, Texas became more urbanized and industrialized, bringing more Anglos and Mexicans into the area. By Anglo standards, blacks, indigenous people, and Mexicans were not whites but people of color different from whites who threatened the white way of life. Ideologies of mongrelization and separatism (via racialization) quickly spread across Anglo homes and businesses, establishing that Mexicans were clearly not of the same racial stock as white Americans (De León 1983; Reséndez 2005). The idea that people of color

inhabiting the southwest were inferior justified Manifest Destiny (Weeks 1996; Gómez

2007) and helped fuel the Mexican American War, leading to the establishment of the

Republic of Texas and the eventual acquisition of parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and

Wyoming and the entire states of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah (what was then

Texas, New Mexico, and Alta California) (Lockhart Rives 1913). Furthermore,

Manifest Destiny and American colonization of the southwest functioned under

> ideologies of race that helped enshrine the twentieth-century racial
> hierarchy that placed African Americans at the bottom with Mexican
> Americans above them so that, in the national racial hierarchy, Mexican
> Americans became a wedge racial group between whites and blacks.
> While Mexican Americans were relegated to second-class citizenship in
> virtually all areas, they had access to legal whiteness under a kind of
> reverse one-drop rule: one drop of Spanish blood allowed them to claim
> whiteness under certain circumstances. The separate racial ideologies that
> developed with respect to Mexican Americans and African Americans
> highlight the complexity and contradictions within white supremacy.
> Whereas the racial ideology that we most commonly associate with this
> period of American history resulted in the hardening of categories that
> governed African Americans (under the one-drop rule), with respect to
> Mexican Americans a racial ideology emerged that depended on those
> boundaries being flexible and inclusive. (Gómez 2007:15).

Latin@s in the U.S.: Legacy, Colonization, and Contemporary Racial Ideologies

To understand both the macro-social and the micro-social levels of racial

organization in the United States, it is important to discuss the system of racialization

embedded in every social structure. This section will first discuss the ideologies of race

pervasive in the United States followed by an examination of racism in the United

States. And, secondly, I will review how Mexicans currently fit into the contemporary

U.S. racial hierarchy.

In countries like the United States, race is an important component of social identity and social interactions and it is generally seen as an identity rooted in what are considered easily recognizable physical characteristics. That is, race is "seen by most people as a part of the natural order of things, and the existence of races is believed to have been confirmed as part of nature by science and scientists" (Smedley and Smedley 2012:1). Therefore, race is based on the phenotypical, physically-manifested characteristics of groups of individuals (such as skin and hair color, hair texture, facial features, etc.) and how these groups identify themselves and are identified by others in terms of these racial characteristics, including the meanings and behaviors associated with that particular racial group and their social positions (Smedley and Smedley 2012; Gómez 2007). In colonial America, race functioned as a model in which people were divided into groups that were seen as naturally unequal and which were ranked vis-à-vis one another. In this race-based society, race became a central organizer in the social structure in which unique patterns and practices developed.

The United States racial system is unique in a variety of ways. First, since the 1920s[17] the racial categories of black and white have been viewed as static and

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[17] The racial categories included in formal population measurements such as the U.S. Census have changed with each ten-year enumeration. Between 1850 and 1930, demographic changes in the United States necessitated that changes be made to the racial categories—the increase in American land from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (annexation of what are now several states of the U.S. and the people residing in them), race-based slavery was increasingly under attack in the mid-late 1800s, the influx of Chinese immigrants during the California Gold Rush and their involvement in the building of the First Transcontinental Railroad (and, subsequently the changes brought about from the Chinese Exclusion Act), as well as experimentation with the inclusion

inflexible, unlike other countries like South Africa and Latin American, who recognize intermediate racial categories, and multiracial individuals could not belong to more than one race[18]. Second, "black" and "African American" are defined based on known black ancestry, consequently lumping and homogenizing individuals with a variety of phenotypes and ancestries into one racial category. Lastly, race is legally and socially immutable; that is, there are no mechanisms in place that allow individuals to transcend or transform racial status (Smedley and Smedley 2012).

Racism, generally defined as actions or attitudes that are either conscious or unconscious, that ultimately serve the purpose of subordinating an individual or group because of the color of their skin or race in ways that are individual, institutional, and systemic in the United States (United States Commission on Civil Rights 1970). Racial practices have become embedded in institutions like the education, religion, family, the economy, as well as others over generations (Bonilla-Silva 1996). The ramifications of racist structures are felt by people of color in their everyday lives through human interactions (Bonilla-Silva 1996; Feagin and Feagin 2007) and can affect their identities (Omi and Winant 1994), attitudes (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000), and actions (Essed

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and exclusion of intermediate categories such as mulatto on and off between 1850 and 1920 (Hochschild and Powell 2008).

[18] Although multiracial individuals have struggled with monoracial classification, the racial classification system in the United States continues to operate under considerations of the one-drop rule. That is, individuals with black ancestors will be considered black regardless of how these individuals self-identity. However, as of the last few decades the multiracial identification movement and multiracial individuals have worked to generate attention to the issue of monoracial identification, imposed identities, and have carved out spaces for mobilization and change (Brunsma and Rockquemore 2008; Gatson 2003).

1991). The racist structure is legitimized by a racist ideology where individuals are socialized in such a way that the treating people of color differently becomes normalized and expected. Crucial to Feagin's (2006) theory of systemic racism is the white racial frame, a system propagated and internalized by many, if not most, whites in the U.S., and in many ways is also believed by many people of color. Herein, whites create a framework used to interpret and rationalize the hierarchical oppression of people of color (Feagin 2006, 2010). In general, the white racial frame views people of color as generally of less social, economic, and political status compared to whites who are seen as superior in culture and achievement. Lastly, the white racial frame creates its own justification through institutions and formal and informal norms that favor whites already in power and generally goes unquestioned and unchallenged in a tacit acceptance by whites. Therefore, the white racial frame not only portrays people of color negatively, but it reinforces the positive representations of whites and whiteness.

Racial stratification in the U.S. generally has been bi-racial (whites and non-whites) for centuries and the discussions of race have focused mostly on black-white relations (Feagin 2000). It is important to note that although the black-white dichotomy has historically been the dominant race paradigm in the U.S., other groups have also been subject to racialization as "non-white," including Asians, Native Americans, and Latin@s (Foley 2004; Menchaca 2002). With the Latin@ population rapidly increasing in the U.S., in particular the Mexican population, it is important to understand that despite the common ancestry and history, Mexicans vary in their racial and ethnic

identification. Latin@s, and in particular Mexicans, have a long history of racialization

in the U.S. rooting back to colonization, as previously discussed in the previous sections.

However, contemporarily, the classification of Mexicans in the U.S. racial hierarchy

fluctuates depending on policy and the effect of the legal system on racial identification.

According to Ian Haney-López's work, racial identity is constructed by means of the law

– society creates, defines, and regulates itself by means of the legal system. Therefore,

because race is socially constructed, it is partially legally reproduced. Thus, the "law

constructs race" (Haney-López 2006:7). The law not only codifies race by giving it a

definition but also defines the range of domination and subordination that comprises race

relations.

Additionally, Latin@ identification in the context of racial and ethnic categories

in the U.S. has caused considerable confusion among people unaccustomed to the black-

white binary central to the racial hierarchy. According to Tienda and Mitchell (2006),

ethnic labels such as "Hispanic" and "Latino" are constantly being used alongside other

racial labels such as "Asian," "black," and "white," in such a way that, "many Hispanics

are beginning to view themselves as a separate race" (p.41). In doing so, Latin@s are

blurring the black-white lines in the racial hierarchy of the United States. Laura Gómez

(2007) reiterates these same points, adding that Mexican Americans, specifically, have a

history of being classified as what she calls "off-white" because they have been legally

defined as white in the past, but treated socially as non-white. This particular legacy of

legal classification as "white" or "off-white" traces back to two seminal moments: the

naturalization law which determined that whites were the only racial group who could be

citizens; and, the Mexican American War in the 1840s, which granted citizenship to all Mexicans in the ceded territories. The Mexicans in the ceded territories required an additional formal recognition as racially white in order to be extended citizenship under the 1790 naturalization law.

However, we must also acknowledge that the creation of panethnic labels such as "Latin@" and "Hispanic" in the Americanizing experience is characteristic of the racialization process. This process is characterized by the recreation of racial categories by various groups as a way to insert themselves into the racial hierarchy, thus changing it. The process of racialization occurs both internally and externally and we must consider who does the categorical defining as well as who polices those margins. In other words, there is a power component that is significant because of positioning in the hierarchy, the power of the power-holders to define the racial hierarchy, and the use of power to create the norms in the racial hierarchy. Therefore, ethnic identity, specifically in the use of panethnic labels, contributes to the racialization process and cannot be excluded from the discourse surrounding the racialization of Latin@s.

In addition, the term "Mexican" itself has changed in meaning over time and across geographical space. In the mid-nineteenth century American whites used it to identify *hispano* elites of the Southwest and people residing below the present-day boundary between the U.S. and México. However, "Mexican" did not include the indigenous population, which included darker-skinned *mestizos* who were treated differently. However, despite differences in labeling practices, Mexicans, like other people of color in the U.S. have also been racialized in their every day experiences, as

the victims of physical, social, and emotional violence, including lynching, poverty, discrimination, and super-exploitation. Additionally, Mexicans in the U.S., who span a full gamut of different skin colors, have been classified as "white" despite their *de facto* treatment as non-white. This is of importance for the following reasons: First, Mexicans are treated as racially homogeneous in the United States (Oboler 1997). In other words, light-skinned individuals are considered to have the same lived experiences as dark-skinned individuals. Second, by continuously shifting the racial categories of Mexican back and forth between white and non-white, Mexicans are subjugated by denying them equal protection under the law (Haney-López 2003).

ORGANIZATION OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter I, this introduction, presents a historical synopsis of race and ethnicity in Latin America and in the United States, including colonial and contemporary ideologies. Additionally, I also provide a historical overview of Latin@s, specifically Mexicans, in Texas in order to better contextualize and situate this project. Chapter II describes the theoretical framework and literature guiding this dissertation, including the theoretical contributions to race and ethnicity scholarship imparted by this research. Chapter III discusses the existing literature on racial and ethnic identity for Latin@s, whites, interracial couples as well as the literature on imposed identity. Chapter IV details methodological practices, including a description of grounded theory, sampling and recruitment, analytic framework and coding process, and methodological reflections of myself and the research assistants who

helped in this project. Chapter V discusses self-identification practices among partners of Mexican descent. Chapter VI examines white racial and ethnic identity development, particularly discussing the evolution of white identity from symbolic ethnicity to what I call "ethnodetachment." Chapter VII assesses the imposition of racial identity from white partners (what I label, "imposed Hispanicity") and the implications of imposed identification between romantic partners on both a micro and macro scale. Finally, Chapter VIII concludes and summarizes this dissertation, noting the general significance of the project findings, limitations, and future work.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation project examines the ways in which individuals in interracial,

Mexican-white relationships navigate their racial and ethnic identities. It is guided by

the theories of racial formation (Omi and Winant 1986, 1994), systemic racism (Feagin

2000, 2006, 2010, 2013), Latin Americanization Theory (Bonilla-Silva 2002, 2005;

Murguía and Sáenz 2002), and colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2003, 2010, 2013). As I

embarked on this study with the goal of understanding what it means to be Mexican in

the United States, the use of racial formation theory proved to be of utmost importance

to the project given its focus on the creation and construction of racial meanings.

However, to fully understand what it means to be Mexican in the U.S., I found myself

needing to understand both how race is constructed and how racism as systemic and

endemic shaped the lives of people of Latin American descent around the globe. By

adding components of colorblind racism and Latin Americanization theory with the

theories of racial formation and systemic racism, I found, like Tanya Golash-Boza's

(2013) analysis of racial formation theory and systemic racism theory, that these

frameworks "mutually reinforce one another and are… crucial" (p.995) to a synthesis of

racial theory. In the following sections I will describe each framework and its

application to this project, specifically examining intimate relationships between

Mexicans and whites as a micro-social racial project that is influenced by and reflects

systemic racism at a macro-social level, the shifts in the racial hierarchy in a search for the creation of inclusionary spaces for other racial groups, particularly Latin@s, and moves towards colorblindness. Additionally, I will not only discuss the applicability of these theoretical frameworks to this project, but will include critiques and limitations for each framework. Lastly, I will discuss situating this research more specifically within all of these frameworks.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Racial Formation Theory

Racial formation theory holds that identities are fluid and depend on social context for their construction. Some scholars studying racial and ethnic identities suggest that racial and ethnic identities are not fixed and unchanging, but instead are fluid and contingent upon situations and moments. They also indicate that these identities come in different forms, vary by situation, and may have different functions (Cornell and Hartmann 1997). Given the fluidity and constructions of racial and ethnic identities, situating this research in a racial formation framework seems best suited for examining how individuals in interracial relationships are affected by their different identities in intimate spaces and in different geographical locations with different racial compositions.

Furthermore, racial formation theory developed as a response to the weaknesses of different paradigms used to study race, including assimilationism/ethnic theory and political economy theories. Robert Park's ethnicity theory became important in the

1920s with the intention of countering eugenicist arguments about race. However, Park did not include Mexicans in his study. By the late 1960s, Glazer and Moynihan argued that once blacks and Puerto Ricans followed the same path as the white ethnics they would achieve the same level of assimilation and upward mobility (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). The implication was that the failure to do so meant an internal inability to follow the white-ethnics' example of pulling themselves up "by their bootstraps." However, Glazer and Moynihan's hypotheses came during the Civil Rights/Black Power Movement, where their arguments were countered by important figures such as Stokely Carmichael and Robert Allen, among others (Ture and Hamilton 1992; Allen 1990). Also among their critics were Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993), who offered critiques of Glazer and Moynihan and other scholars such as William Julius Wilson. However, Massey and Denton's (1993) work also presents some weaknesses – using Chicago as their only case study in comparing Mexicans and blacks, their work implied that the racial marginalization of Mexicans was nowhere near as severe as that of blacks based on the increased number of Mexican-owned businesses in Chicago and a lower segregation index. Additionally, another weakness in Massey and Denton's (1993) work is the lack of differentiation between the Mexican entrepreneurs, many of whom pass as white in Mexico, and the darker Mexican working-class, and their treatment according to social context. This is where racial formation theory becomes more useful than previous theories.

Omi and Winant's (1994) theory of racial formation emerged as a theory that attempts to grasp the complexities of racial identity, politics and social structure in the

United States. It is defined as a "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 1994:55) and which is situated in historically structured projects. Omi and Winant (1994) attempt to find a middle ground between diverging ideologies. First, the essentialist ideology that views race as "matter of innate characteristics, of which skin color and other physical attributes provide only the most obvious, and in some respects most superficial, indicators" (Omi and Winant 1994:64). Second, the view that treats race as insignificant, claiming that because race is a social construct, it will eventually disappear if it is ignored.

Key to Omi and Winant's (1994) construction of race is the concept of a "racial project." Racial projects, defined as "an interpretation, representation or explanation of racial dynamics" (Omi and Winant 1994:56), thus they involve the concurrent understanding of racial dynamics and reorganization of social resources. This process links the meanings people attach to race to the structural experiences of race, both at micro and macro levels. The racism experienced by people of color in the United States can be understood, both currently and historically, as a racial project where distrust and disbelief are promoted.

Therefore, racial projects are instrumental to creating and reproducing hierarchical structures of power based on essentialist race (Omi and Winant 1994). Racial formation and racial projects are considered in terms of macro-social scale, national social processes and movements, as well as on the micro social level or the ways in which everyday experiences are racially organized. Additionally, racial formation understands micro-level utterances as reflections, incorporations, and re-

workings of racial projects at the macro level. Thus, the relationship between these two levels is dynamic, in which individuals articulate racial projects with the cultural and material resources available to them in the larger social context from which the racial projects originate. Alternatively, as individuals draw on and rework racial projects at the micro level, they simultaneously contribute to shifts in articulations and understandings at the macro level as well. Racial formation then shows that "racial meanings are neither inherent nor fixed, but rather are contested political projects that individual and institutional actors mobilize to do organization and redistribution work" (Carbado and Harris 2012:183).

Omi and Winant (1994) use the story of Susie Guillory Phipps as an example of a racial project. In the 1980s, Phipps ineffectively sued the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records in an attempt to change her official racial classification from black to white. Phipps, whose father was a white planter and whose mother was a black slave, was designated as "col." (an abbreviation for "colored") on her birth certificate in accordance with a 1970 state law that declared anyone with at least one-thirty-second of "Negro blood" as black. This instance raised questions regarding race, it's meaning, and its use in public policy. The Attorney General at the time, Ron Davis, stood by the law claiming that systems of racial classification were necessary in the compliance of federal data collection requirements and health prevention. On the other hand, Phipps's lawyer reasoned that the practice of assigning racial categories on birth certificates was unconstitutional and that this particular designation was inaccurate. Ultimately, Phipps lost the legal battle and the court's decision to do so affirmed the legality of assigning a

racial category to individuals. This case shows the ongoing issues surrounding the definitions of race and its institutional meaning.

Like the Phipps case, my work herein examines self-identification practices and how partners identify one another in romantic relationships, with a particular application of the theory of racial formation at the micro level as influenced by racial projects at the macro-level such as codified racial classification systems such as those employed by the U.S. Census Bureau and other formal data collection agencies that use fixed racial categories to measure racial and ethnic identification. However, to understand both the macro-social and micro-social levels of racial organization it is important to discuss the systems of racialization in the United States. Thus, the following section will discuss the institutionalization of racism and how Mexicans fit into the racial hierarchies.

Systemic Racism

Racism in the United States is systemic and over generations racist practices have become embedded in institutions like the educational system, churches, families, and the economy, among others (Bonilla-Silva 1996). The ramifications of racist structures are felt by people of color in their everyday lives through human interaction (Bonilla-Silva 1996; Feagin and Feagin 2007) and can affect their identities (Omi and Winant 1994), attitudes (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000), and actions (Essed 1991). The racist structure is legitimized by a racist ideology where individuals are socialized in such a way that the differential treatment of people of color becomes normalized and expected. Racism is hegemonic so it often appears invisible. Knowingly or

unknowingly participating in racist practices reinforces the hierarchies of racism.

As Feagin (2000, 2006, 2010, 2013) describes, systemic racism has shaped and continues to dominate social institutions and life in the United States. Systemic racism "encompasses a broad range of racialized dimensions of this society: the racist framing, racist ideology, stereotyped attitudes, racist emotions, discriminatory habits and actions, and extensive racist institutions developed over centuries by whites" (Feagin 2000:xii). A crucial aspect of Feagin's (2006) theory of systemic racism is the white racial frame, a system that has been propagated and held by most white Americans and in part has been accepted by many people of color where whites create a framework used to interpret and rationalize the hierarchical oppression of people of color (Feagin 2006, 2010). This framework includes racial images, interpretations, emotions, and actions closely tied to racial cognitions and understandings (Feagin 2000). In general, the white racial frame views people of color as generally of less social, economic, and political status compared to whites who are seen as superior in culture and achievement. On another level, the white racial frame also views the control of social institutions to be in the hands of whites, but simultaneously fails to recognize the unjust enrichment and disproportionate privilege accompanying that control. Lastly, the white racial frame generally goes unquestioned and unchallenged in a tacit acceptance by whites. Therefore, the white racial frame not only portrays people of color negatively, but it reinforces positive representations of whites and whiteness.

Furthermore, racial stratification in general in the United States has often been described as bi-racial (white and non-white), in particular, black-white (Feagin 2000).

However, Latin@s, and in particular Mexicans, have a long history of racialization in the United States with roots back to Spanish colonization. During colonization in Latin America, the Spanish invented racial categories after coming in contact with the Amerindian people, transporting enslaved Africans to the Americas, and both witnessing and engaging in miscegenation between them (Cox 1970; Menchaca 2002). Constructing different racial categories served both economic purposes and to ensure social control of the colonies, including sanctioning and extending privilege when necessary. The legal construction of race invented by the Spaniards in the Americas eventually gave way to an informal one, where some *mestizos* in northern Mexico claimed whiteness and passed as "white" (Gutierrez 1991).

Within the context of the United States, the origins of Mexicans being classified as "white" can be traced to two seminal moments: the 1790 naturalization law which stated that only whites could be citizens; and, the Mexican-American War, which granted citizenship to all Mexicans in the ceded territories. Therefore, if only whites could be citizens, then Mexicans needed to be formally recognized as white. However, this was tested in 1897 when Ricardo Rodríguez, a dark-skinned Mexican man applied for naturalization. Although Rodríguez appeared indigenous, as long as he testified that he was not "Indian" he was eligible for citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and would be guaranteed "the privileges of whites" while not violating the "racial clauses of the naturalization laws" (Menchaca 2002:284).

The term "Mexican" itself has changed over time and space. In the mid-nineteenth century it was used by whites to identify *hispano* elites of the Southwest and

people residing below the present-day boundary between the United States and Mexico. However, the term did not include "Indians," which could include darker *mestizos*[19] if compared to a larger white population and who were treated differently. The elites of what is now the U.S. Southwest, however, did not identify as "Mexicans" but rather with reference to their states of residences, as *californios*, *tejanos*, and *nuevomexicanos* (Gutierrez 1994; Resendez 2005; Sanchez 1995; Haas 1995).

Although Mexicans in the United States were already becoming racialized in the mid-nineteenth century as a means of justifying territorial annexation, the only national legal acknowledgement of this racial construction was not executed until the 1930s when the U.S. census first—and for the only time ever--established a "Mexican" category (Rodriguez 2000; Lee 1993; Goldberg 1997). In the nineteenth century, expansion across the continent exposed groups who were previously not part of the racial discourse, such as Mexicans and Chinese. Much of the discourse into the mid-nineteenth century then emerged out of the debates on slavery and "the Indian question" (Saxton 2003:295). Therefore, the existing discourse on blacks and Native Americans was applied to Mexicans and Chinese. De Leon (1983) summarizes this association by stating that, "The black component could be detected, and allusions to the 'half-Negro, half-Indian greaser' and Mexicans of 'mixed Indian and African blood' were not absent from the literature of the era" (p.15). Thus, the way in which people of color get classified as "white," as in the case of Mexicans, shows that racialization/racial

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[19] *Mestizo* refers to someone of mixed blood, specifically a person of mixed European and American Indian ancestry.

formation does not have to be official.

Latin Americanization Theory

Mexicans, like other people of color in the U.S., have also been racialized in their daily lives, as the victims of lynching, poverty, discrimination, and super-exploitation. They serve as proof that one does not have to be considered another "race" to be made into the "Other." Racial formation theorists who primarily rely on formal racial categories in addressing Latin@s in general show contradictions in their arguments. For example, Matthew Jacobson (2002) implies that the racialization of Mexicans only occurred in limited instances and not consistently:

> The "degenerate Mexicans" of 1840s imagery might become honorary
> "Caucasians" in the context of school segregation later in the century,
> only to be reinscribed as a dangerously shiftless and unassimilable
> element when Pancho Villa rides (or when intolerance of
> undocumented immigrants mounts in Pete Wilson's California)
> (p.142).

Jacobson does not use the term "honorary 'Caucasian'" to classify eastern and southern European immigrants, rather solely designates it to the "degenerate Mexicans" who will never fully be welcomed into whiteness. However, the misconception of Mexicans as "white" does not end there, even within critical race theory. While Jacobson allows for the possibility of Mexicans being non-white, Stuart Hall assumes Mexicans can only be "white" without allowing for even the possibility of conditional non-whiteness (Hall 2002).

On the other hand, Bonilla-Silva (2002) argues that the Civil Rights movement

brought with it changes in racial stratification. For example, the "rate of interracial dating and marriage, particularly between Latinos and Whites and Asians and Whites (Moran 2001; Qian and Lichter 2000)" (Bonilla-Silva 201) has increased and continues to increase. Bonilla-Silva's (2002) Latin Americanization theory suggests that the United States is no longer bi-racially stratified, but rather is shifting into a tri-racial system much like that found in Latin American and Caribbean nations (Bonilla-Silva 2004). In this tri-racial system, the three groups comprising it are "whites" at the top, "honorary whites" in the middle and a non-white group or "collective black" at the bottom (Bonilla-Silva 2002).

According to Bonilla-Silva (2002), there are several reasons why it is possible for the system to become triracial. First, the demography of the United States has changed to the point where racial minorities make up 30% of the population and it is projected that by 2050 minorities will become the numeric majority. With the darkening of the population, Bonilla-Silva (2002) also argues that this tri-racial system may be emerging in order to enable the retention of white power by forming an intermediary racial group to cushion racial conflicts. This intermediate group would incorporate some of the newcomers into the white racial strata while also incorporating most immigrants into the collective black strata. Second, according to Bonilla-Silva (2002) and Smith (1995), the post-civil rights era created a new white supremacy, which Bonilla-Silva labels as "new racism". This "new racism" retains systems which promote racial discrimination in a much more covert and seemingly non-racial manner. This "kinder and gentler" form has also produced color-blind racism, which "denies the salience of race, scorns those who

talk about race, and increasingly proclaims that 'We are all Americans'" (Bonilla-Silva 2002:6). Third, the foreign and "dark" workforce has become increasingly globalized, and with this globalization the European nations employing minorities in their workforce have developed an internal "racial structure" to help maintain white power and create an underclass (Bonilla-Silva 2002). Fourth, conservative political ideologies and actions vis-à-vis the multi-racial movement have transformed working spaces and how we gather data on race in these settings in the U.S. Lastly, what Steinberg (1995) has identified as the "racial retreat" or the attack on affirmative action, signals the end of race-based social policy in the U.S. If race-based social policy is eliminated, indicating that race no longer affects minorities' status, the U.S. may maintain or even increase the levels of racial inequality. Adopting colorblind ideologies such as that of the racial retreat ignores how salient race is in all of our social structures. The end of race-based social policy, therefore, would have major implications for all minorities and especially for Latin@s who flow in and out of *de jure* and *de facto* racialized identities.

With this in mind, Bonilla-Silva hypothesizes that the "white" group will include "traditional" whites, new "white" immigrants, and sometime in the future, assimilated Latin@s, some multiracials, as well as, other subgroups. "Honorary whites" will be made up of mostly light-skinned Latin@s, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Asian Indians, Chinese Americans, and most Middle Eastern Americans. Finally, "collective blacks" will include blacks, dark-skinned Latin@s, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and perhaps Filipinos (Bonilla-Silva 2002).

Although Bonilla-Silva (2002) claims that this tri-racial system emerged after the

civil rights movement, other scholars such as Murguía and Sáenz (2002) believe that this tri-racial stratification has always been part of the racial hierarchy of the United States. They argue that at the time of colonization the U.S. consisted of English whites at the top, white indentured servants in the middle, and Native Americans, and later, black slaves, at the bottom. Now, the only change in the three-tier system is that all European whites, regardless of country of origin, are at the top, middle-class Asians and Latin@s are in the second-tier, and the working and lower class people of color are at the bottom rung. Murguía and Sáenz (2002) clarify that the only difference in the racial system is that the hierarchy went from white-white-black to white-brown-black. They also emphasize social class standing in their critique of Bonilla-Silva's Latin Americanization theory. In particular they state that members of every racial group will eventually experience all tiers and use the example of poor Appalachian whites who will remain at the bottom despite their origin and skin color.

The results for Bonilla-Silva's (2002) theory reflect the serious limits to his data, including, insufficient data on Latin@s and Asians. Despite these limitations, important information arose from this study, such as indications of an emergence of an internal stratification among racial minorities. This internal stratification has "led some minorities to develop racial attitudes similar to those of whites, and others to develop attitudes closer to those of Blacks" (Bonilla-Silva 2002:11). An important component of this study is being able to gauge whether individuals in interracial relationships experience this internal stratification among minorities, as well as, among whites. Another component of this study examines how racialized social systems are perceived

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both by minorities and whites in relationships and where Latin@s fit into that system. The formal racialization of Latin@s is another gap in both racial formation theory and in studies focusing on Latin@s. For example, Mexicans in the United States, who span the full range of skin tones, have been classified as "white" despite their *de facto* treatment as non-white. This is important for the following reasons. First, Mexicans in the United States have been treated as racially homogenous. In other words, light-skinned individuals are considered to have the same lived experiences as dark-skinned individuals. And second, by continuously shifting the racial categories of Mexicans back and forth between white and non-white, Mexicans are further subjugated by denying them equal protection under the law (Haney-Lopez 2003).

Colorblind Racism

Colorblind racism, which focuses on the problems of race-neutral, colorblind ideologies (Carr 1997; Crenshaw 1997; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Gallagher 2003) goes beyond the failure or reluctance to see race, it holds that "in an environment where institutional racism and discrimination have been replaced by equal opportunity, one's qualifications, not one's color or ethnicity, should be the mechanism by which upward mobility is achieved" (Gallagher 2003:23). Expressions of color, race or ethnicity only become acceptable in relation to the larger capitalist market where items representative of these, such as apparel, music, and language can, and are acceptable to, be exchanged, but discussions about race as a system that carries privileges and disadvantages shaping life chances are viewed as inaccurate accounts of race relations in the United States. For

most Americans, racism exists in the form of blatant white supremacy, usually associated with extreme hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan or everyday, blue-collar bigoted conservatives like Archie Bunker from the television show "All in the Family." However, if we consider Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's definition of racism as, "*a matter of group power; it is about a dominant racial group (whites) striving to maintain its systemic advantages and minorities fighting to subvert the racial status quo*" (2007:131; emphasis in original), then the blatant racism of hate groups and the Archie Bunkers of the world does not explain the rampant racial inequalities experienced by people of color. Instead, whites participate in white supremacy by "following the racial script of America" (Bonilla-Silva 2007:131).

To explain the levels of racial inequality in a the U.S., where the majority of people (whites) claim that issues of race are no longer relevant and that racism was a problem of the previous generations, theories of colorblind racism have emerged (Bonilla-Silva 1996, 2002b, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011; Bonilla-Silva, Lewis and Embrick 2004; Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Bonilla-Silva, Forman, Lewis and Embrick 2003). Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013) in particular has devoted much of his career in explaining colorblind racism and argues that whites have adopted new ideologies to justify current racial inequality and preserve systemic white privilege.

Colorblind racism is based on abstractly extending egalitarian principles to racial minorities and the belief that racial minorities are culturally defective and therefore unsuccessful (e.g., minorities have the same access to educational and work

opportunities as whites, but *they* do not take advantage or are not capable of succeeding in these because *they* do not want to) (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003; Bobo et al. 1997; Essed 1996).   Instead of legally codified rules permitting and enabling racist practices, whites have adopted new strategies with the same purpose of perpetuating racial inequality. For example, Jim Crow laws had housing covenants that legally segregated whites from blacks, helping maintain all white neighborhoods, contributing to white accumulation of social capital, while simultaneously disadvantaging blacks who were forced to live in neighborhoods with sub par housing, schools, and infrastructure. After Jim Crow ended, realtors adopted more covert strategies such as red lining and block busting to steer blacks away with the ultimate goal of keeping neighborhoods white. Similar practices have been used in other realms, including universities, banks, restaurants, etc. (Bonilla-Silva 2007). Furthermore, while social analysts agree that whites no longer subscribe to the blatant racist tenets of the Jim Crow era, this does not indicate an end to racism. Instead, colorblind racism has taken over as the dominant racial ideology that continues to blame the victim in an indirect, slippery way that matches this new style of racism.

Bonilla-Silva's (2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013) theory on color-blind racism is comprised of four frames: (1) Abstract Liberalism, (2) Naturalization, (3) Cultural Racism, and (4) Minimization of Racism. "Abstract Liberalism" employs the use of political liberalism ideas such as "equal opportunity" and economic liberalism (choice, individualism) in abstract ways to describe matters of race. By framing issues of race in the coded and masking language of liberalism, whites come off as "reasonable" and "moral" while challenging practical approaches for dealing with inequality (e.g., equal

opportunity rhetoric is often used by most whites to oppose affirmative action policies because they represent a "preferential treatment" of certain groups. By disregarding that people of color are underrepresented in a variety of institutions, including work and education, whites abstractly use the rhetoric of "equal opportunity") (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003).

"Naturalization" allows whites to disregard racial occurrences by suggesting that they are naturally occurring phenomena. For example, whites can explain segregation or the limited contact between whites and non-whites, including whites' preference for significant others who are white, as a naturally occurring instances of personal and natural preference (the idea that people of all backgrounds "gravitate towards likeness") instead of phenomena that is racially motivated (residential segregation) or racist (preference for whites as friends and significant others). To justify these myths in a colorblind way, whites suggest that these preferences are based on biology and that they are common among all social groups, "preferences for primary associations with members of one's race are rationalized as nonracial because '*they* (racial minorities) do it too'" (Bonilla-Silva 2003:28). By naturalizing these ideas across all racial groups, whites can distance themselves from blatant racist practices while continuing to blame the victim and retaining the status quo.

"Cultural Racism" is a tactic employed by whites to deflect possible accusations of racism wherein the culture of people of color is used to justify their secondary status in society. By arguing that the cultures of minorities are "different" (read as inferior), whites can absolve themselves of fault or contribution in the "poor choices" made by

people of color while simultaneously blame minorities for their social status. This type

of framing continues to blame the victim and argues that, "minorities' standing is a

product of their lack of effort loose family organization, and inappropriate or deficient

values" (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003:118).

"Minimization of Racism" regards discrimination only as blatant racist acts

(think behaviors generally associated with the Ku Klux Klan and other white

supremacist hate groups) and allows whites to determine what constitutes as a racist act,

policing the experiences of people of color, and declaring them "hypersensitive" or

"using the race card" while again simultaneously diminishing (and invalidating) the

experiences of people of color in the racial terrain and retaining the status quo of white

supremacy (Bonilla-Silva 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013; Bonilla-Silva et al. 2003).

THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS

Situating this project then in these four theoretical frameworks then determines

that self-identification practices, along with how individuals in interracial, intimate

partnerships perceive their partners, are part of a micro-level racial project (influenced

by macro-level racial projects such as self-identifying practices dictated by the collection

of demographic information from official governmental agencies such as the U.S.

Census Bureau) where racial and ethnic identities are sociohistorically created,

transformed and destroyed (Omi and Winant 1986, 1994), in this case both in an

intimate partnership as well as a specific geographic location; are influenced by the

permanence of racial hierarchies and systemic racism in the U.S. that continuously retain

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whites at the top and position people of color in lower rungs through a variety of social,

economic, political, legal and institutional mechanisms (Feagin 2000, 2006, 2010, 2013;

Feagin and Feagin 2007); especially positions Latin@s in the U.S. in "honorary white"

and "collective black" categories (Bonilla-Silva 2002) in similar (and different) ways as

the Irish once where (Murguía and Sáenz 2002) in accordance with Latin

Americanization theory (Bonilla-Silva 2002); and, through engagement in these

interracial romantic relationships, contributes to the perpetuation of colorblind racist

ideologies that deceptively act as racially progressive, inclusive behavior but which in

reality serves to retain the racial status quo, often disguised as racial "awareness" or

"conscience" without fully understanding the ways in which race operates in the United

States. Thus, this project considers the ways in which racial and ethnic self-

identification practices are micro-racial projects that are influenced by history, context,

the pervasiveness of racism in the U.S., including the organization of people of different

races into a hierarchy where whites are located at the top (and an accumulation of wealth

and resources) and other races are distributed at different, lower rungs (also with

material repercussions), and the involvement in interracial relationships as a mechanism

that often disguises colorblind racism.

CHAPTER III

PREVIOUS LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Racial identification among individuals of Latin American descent in the U.S. is
often problematic given that the current system of racial classification is generally
characterized as dichotomous, black and white, while Latin American racial
identification varies in shades of color. Furthermore, the creation of panethnic/panracial
labels such as "Latin@" and "Hispanic" in the Americanizing experience is
characteristic of the racialization process, where certain physical and cultural
characteristics are attributed to specific groups. This process occurs both internally and
externally and we must consider who is doing the categorical defining and who polices
those boundaries.

The term "Hispanic," like many other labels used to identify minorities in the
U.S., introduces the question of how people are defined and stratified as well as how
they define themselves. It also indicates that there is a gap between how people of Latin
American descent self-identify and how they are defined by a term created and used by
others to identify them. In particular, "Hispanic" is a term that generalizes the social and
political understandings of millions of people who fall under a variety of different races,
classes, languages, national origins, genders and religions. Nelson and Tienda (1997)
note that, "'Hispanic' as a label combines colonized natives and their offspring,
foreigner and political refugees under one ethnic umbrella, but the coherence of this

label is questionable on theoretical and hierarchical grounds" (p.8). The use of

"Hispanic" and "Latin@" has become a highly debated topic with regard to how

appropriate and encompassing either label is to represent people of Latin American

descent. Hayes-Bautista and Chapa (1987) propose using "Latin@" to describe a

national-origin group from a certain geographical region that has been viewed and

treated as a racial group, individually and institutionally, in the U.S. According to their

research, "Latin@" suggests a conscious choice versus the imposition of the "Hispanic"

label (created by the Office of Management and Budget in the 1970s). According to

Tienda and Mitchell (2006), labels such as "Hispanic" and "Latin@," which are

traditionally considered ethnic labels, are constantly being used alongside other racial

labels such as "Asian," "black" and "white," in such a way that "many Hispanics are

beginning to view themselves as a separate race" (p.41). By viewing themselves as a

separate race, Latin@s are blurring the black-white lines in the racial hierarchy of the

U.S. Laura E. Gómez (2007) reiterates some of the same points made by Tienda and

Mitchell (2006) pointing out that Mexican Americans, specifically, have a history of

being classified as what she calls "off-white" because throughout history they have been

legally defined as white, but treated socially as non-white.

Furthermore, scholars like Linda Alcoff (2000, 2005a, 2005b) advocate for the

use of "ethnorace," a term used by David Theo Goldberg in *Racist Culture* (1993),

because of how Latin@s in the U.S. are homogenized in a generic way that often is not

related ethnicity, are often treated and at times even classified as a racial group while not

formally acknowledged as one and ignoring racial identities in the countries of origin

(never mind asking Latin@s how *they* would like to be identified), and the lack of fit of the "Latin@" label in the black-white binary. According to Alcoff (2005b)

> Unlike race, ethnorace does not imply a common descent, which is precisely what tends to embroil race in notions of biological determinism and natural and heritable characteristics. Ethnorace might have the advantage of bringing into play the elements of both human agency and subjectivity involved in ethnicity – that is, an identity that is the product of self-creation – at the same time that it acknowledges the uncontrolled racializing aspects associated with the visible body (p.42).

By situating Latin@ identity within "ethnorace," Alcoff (2000, 2005a, 2005b) acknowledges that race and ethnicity are vital to the understanding of this group's identity in the context of the United States. By only using ethnicity the everyday experiences of Latin@s are contradicted while also obscuring how ethnicity often does the work of race. Additionally, Alcoff (2005b) observes that "race is a construction that is variable enough to be stretched opportunistically as the need arises in order to maintain and expand discrimination" (p.251) and "that the hegemony of the black/white paradigm has stymied the development of an adequate account of the diverse racial realities in the United States and weakened the general accounts of racism that attempt to be truly inclusive" (p.253).

The bulk of research available on interracial and interethnic couples and racial and ethnic identity has overwhelmingly focused on white ethnic groups, black-white relationships and marriages, and Asian-white coupling. While these do not speak directly to the experiences of Mexican-white couples, they do, however, serve the purpose of providing a comparison and context of identity in intimate spaces.

Nevertheless, these studies are limited in their analysis of self-identification and perceived/imposed identification among romantic partners.

LATIN@ SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Rogelio Sáenz and Benigno Aguirre (1991) used survey data collected in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas to examine what ethnic identities were used by people of Mexican ancestry and under which conditions these were commonly used and when they varied. They found that people identified differently based on who they were around at the time, that is, the ethnic identity of the self "shifts with changes in reference groups (family and persons of non-Mexican descent, or 'outsiders')" (Sáenz and Aguirre 1991:24). That is, their identities changed by social context and were often situationally-specific, and commonly used strategically and as adaptive responses in interactions.

Suzanne Oboler's (1995) study on ethnic labels used by Latin@s shows that there is a "gap between the self-identification of people of Latin American descent and their definition through a label created and used by others" (p.2). Her study, based on interviews with 22 Spanish-speaking workers in the garment industry in New York who were enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, focused on the meanings of the term "Hispanic" as it was perceived by these individuals as part of their self-identification and as they thought it played a role in their everyday lives. She found that most of the interview respondents defined themselves in terms of the continent's geography. Additionally, respondents found the word "Hispanic" to have a negative

connotation because of how it categorized Spanish-speaking people into one label that assumes a shared experience through language (Oboler 1995).

Despite the rich information on the ways that Latinos construct their social and racial identities, Oboler's work lacks analysis of Latinos' experiences in a racially stratified society. For example, theorists focusing on racialized systems have emphasized that the structure of racism occurs in social networks at various levels of society (Bonilla -Silva 2002; Feagin 2006). Unlike these theorists, Oboler (1995) does not include discussions of social networks other than the mention of garment workers and participant recruitment at English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Furthermore, relational variations, such as kinship, friendship groups, and relationships, are not discussed, which, as Kiang and Fuligni (2009) have pointed out, is lacking in research on ethnic identity.

Alejandro Portes and Dag MacLeod (1996) surveyed second-generation Latin@ school youth in Florida and California about how they identified themselves in an open-ended questionnaire. From the responses, they classified self-identification into four categories: non-hyphenated American, hyphenated American, non-hyphenated foreign nationality, and Hispanic. Upon further analysis, they found that "Hispanic-identified adolescents tend to come from lower-status families and to have lower knowledge of the host society's language and culture" (Portes and MacLeod 1996:543). By incorporating López and Espiritu's (1990) and Massey's (1995) work, Portes and MacLeod (1996) conclude that populations of Latin American descent in the United States are too varied to create a coherent whole. While Portes and MacLeod's (1996) findings are important

and highlight one of the major issues with identity among Latin@s, they do not consider variables such as forms of family immigration, social and cultural context, relational variants, or other structural determinants.

The work of Thomas Macias (2004) explores how third-plus generation Mexican Americans are able to perpetuate Mexican ethnicity within relatively integrated environments in Phoenix, Arizona and San Jose, California. Drawing on Herbert Gans's (1979) idea of "symbolic ethnicity," which argues that ethnicity serves as an expressive function instead of an instrumental one in third-plus generation European Americans. Other research making connections between "symbolic ethnicity" and Mexican Americans suggest that these do not follow the same multiple-generation patterns described by Gans (Keefe 1992; Keefe and Padilla 1987; Vélez-Ibañez 1996). While Macias' work does not set out to debunk symbolic ethnicity as it applies to Mexican Americans, but rather seeks to test it by taking into consideration direct and indirect social relations and ties that continue to inform and influence Mexican ethnicity beyond the second generation (Macias 2004). By focusing on Mexican Catholicism, Spanish-language television viewership, and cross-national encounters. Macias (2004) found that while there is lack of social connection to the Catholic Church as an institution, interactions with older generations of Mexican Americans in addition to the modification of folk practices contribute to the permanence of ethnically meaningful connections with the church. Furthermore, Spanish-language viewership among the third-plus-generation allowed Mexican Americans "to imagine themselves as part of a broad ethnic collectivity via electronic media" (Macias 2004:312). Lastly, Macias' (2004) work also

shows that cross-national encounters depend on relationships with people of Mexican origin. Visits to Mexico, helping a Mexican friend or co-workers, and hiring Mexican immigrants for work were among the cross-national experiences shared by the people in Macias' (2004) research. These experiences can later lead to more embedded ethnic practices, such as becoming interested in art or literature because of a relationship with someone from Mexico or a trip to Mexico.

How skin color gradation affects experiences of racial discrimination and others' perceptions of race is another component of racial self-identification among Latin@s in the U.S. Tanya Golash-Boza and William Darity, Jr. (2008) use survey data to study the links between skin color, discrimination, and identity. Their analysis found that for their *social whitening* hypothesis, the respondents of the National Survey of Latinos (NSL) with a family income of over $50,000 and respondents with some college education were more likely to identify as white. Although this seems to support this hypothesis, their findings from the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) dataset were not statistically significant, thus giving mixed evidence for this hypothesis. The *identificational assimilation* hypothesis also received mixed support. Respondents of the LNPS and NLS datasets who were bilingual or only spoke English were more likely to identify as "other". The LNPS results show that second- and third-generation respondents were more likely to identify as White. On the other hand, the NLS survey results showed that "second-generation respondents were more likely to self-identify as Hispanic than as white, and third- and later-generation respondents were more likely to self-identify as white than as other" (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008:926). The

racialization hypothesis suggests that for respondents of the LNPS, dark-skinned Latinos were more likely to self-identify as "black" or "other" rather than as "white." Results from the NLS showed that participants who at some point had experienced discrimination were more likely to perceive themselves and racially identify as "black," "other" or "Hispanic." Both datasets confirmed the racialization hypothesis that Hispanics who experience discrimination are less likely to identify as "White."

WHITE IDENTITY

White identity, in a similar fashion as Hispanic/Latin@ identity, is a complex concept, and one that has experienced a recent resurgence of interest among sociologists. McDermott and Samson (2005) observe that scholars are starting to understand the intricacies of white racial identity and how racism and racial inequality are closely tied to the development and preservation of white racial identity. Like Latin@ identity, the boundaries and definitions of white identity continuously change over time and space. Over the course of time, the definitions of whiteness have evolved and research has shown that this evolution is not necessarily reflexive of changes in patterns of identification, but rather they showcase the political and legal systems of racialization (Haney-Lopez 2006).

White identity is especially important to study because as Coco Fusco (1988) noted, "racial identities are not only black, Latino, Asian, Native Americans, and so on; they are also white… Without specifically addressing white ethnicity, there can be no critical evaluation of the construction of the other" (p.7). Furthermore, although much

attention has focused on identity, much of that literature has concentrated on non-white

identification, such as black, African American, Mexican American or Hispanic (Larkey,

Hecht and Martin 1993; Kibria 2000; Ruiz 1990; Salett and Koslow 1994). Taking into

consideration the historical role of race, especially the role it has played in protecting

white privilege and denying that same privilege to people of color, it is no surprise that

most of the research on racial identity development pertains to minorities.

Although the term "white" is usually used in reference to people of European

ancestry[20], the understandings and meanings of "white" may vary depending on

community or region. Discussions regarding the appropriate terminology for whites are

reflexive of the relationship between self-identification and social context. While the

U.S. Census has always used the term white and is the most commonly used term today,

other labels, such as Caucasian, European American, and Anglo have also been used by

whites when asked about racial identifications. Goldstein's (1999) research sampling

the 1996 Current Population Survey showed that although white was the preferred

nomenclature by 60% of the respondents, geographic variation showed differences in the

meanings attributed to "white". Goldstein's (1999) research also shows that in the

South, white is the preferred terminology, whereas in the Southwest and New England

area Anglo is preferred. More educated respondents were more likely to prefer

Caucasian and Goldstein (1999) imagines that it is a way for respondents to break away

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[20] This generally does not include those of Hispanic or Latin@ descent who are usually
considered as people containing a mixture of indigenous and Spanish/Portuguese.
However, those who are considered of non-racially mixed Spanish or Portuguese descent
are generally incorporated under whiteness.

from the association to whiteness or social dominance through the adaptation of a "scientific" term.

Previous research has also identified several characteristics of white racial identity. Most importantly, white racial identity is often invisible or taken for granted; it is rooted in social and economic privilege, and that its meaning is contextual and situational. Because of their dominant status in the United States, and because whiteness is generally taken for granted, whites have not had a need to think about or be aware of their own racial or ethnic identity (Mahoney 1997; McIntosh 1997). Thus, whites generally do not define themselves through race or ethnicity, with race not being necessarily salient in their identity formation process (Gallagher 2000). Discussions of whiteness revolve around two themes: (1) whites becoming aware of racism and moving towards becoming anti-racists; and, (2) white supremacy and white pride which promote privilege and racism. One of the limitations of studying white supremacy and anti-racist identities is how white racial identity is understood in relation to how one's identity develops in relation to or in response to the oppressive dominant society.

Of the research that has been conducted about whiteness, probably the most notorious is the work of Peggy McIntosh (1997), which found that white Americans have little racial awareness of or consciousness about themselves. This argument usually roots from psychoanalytic work or from the symbolic identity theories, both of which "rest on an assumed logic of racial difference ('our' Whiteness is somehow different from 'their' non-Whiteness)" (Hartman, Gerteis and Croll 2009:406).

Secondly, whiteness studies revolve around white awareness and understanding

of structural advantages tied to their racial status, or white privilege. Studies focusing on white privilege branch into two routes. The first branch argues that white Americans are unaware of the benefits they hold through whiteness—in other words, whites are not aware of the realities of racial inequality. The second branch tries to go beyond awareness and looks at whether or not whites understand racial inequalities and injustices in general and their own position in that same system (looking at the advantages they have personally experienced because of the racial hierarchy).

A third finding in whiteness studies takes the larger understandings of culture, incorporation, social justice and racial equality and places them on a more individual level. Color-blindness (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000) stipulates that the invisibility of white identity and white privilege is supported by an individualistic and highly accepted ideology based on merit. John Hartigan (1997b) argues that studies of whiteness demonstrate that whites benefit from what whites think are seemingly neutral arrangements and institutionalizations, which appear to hold no racial bias. Because of this, whites are more likely to adhere to color-blind ideologies and explanations of individual success, or in other words, they are more likely to believe that American society is race neutral and based on individual merit, hard work and effort as keys to success.

Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll (2009) focus on the invisibility of racial identity among whites, the understanding and lack of understanding of racial privileges, and loyalty to color-blind ideals in order to awareness and conceptualizations of racial status among whites. Their analysis shows that whites are less aware of privilege than

individuals from racial minorities and unfailingly adopt color-blind, individualistic

ideologies. Furthermore, their results also show that whites are more attached to their

white identity and culture and are much more aware of how their race privileges them

and provides advantages.

Martin et al.'s (1999) study of white Americans looked at how whites prefer to

self-label themselves. Their study, which surveyed 371 college students throughout the

United States, found that the most preferred label was "white," followed by "Caucasian,"

"white American" and "European American" in that order of preference. The three least

preferred labels were "Euro-Americans," "Anglo," and "WASP." They also find the

following four conclusions to their study. First, the consistency in responses was

particularly interesting because students were surveyed throughout the country from

varying socioeconomic statuses, in various settings (cities, suburbs) and in different

types of colleges and universities in the United States. They conclude that perhaps the

responses signify a universal understanding of what it means to be white. Second,

similar to Gallagher's (1994) findings, Martin et al. (1999) observe that a preference for

"white" and "Caucasian" labeling "indicates the desire for universalizing the subject

position—and the meaning of White" (p.44). Third, Martin et al. (1999) found a large

number of non-responses and unusable answers, which they have interpreted as a

resistance stemming from power and the invisibility of whiteness. Fourth, they found

that there is little difference between the preferences for labels used by whites and those

they preferred other racial and ethnic groups to use. Martin et al. (1999) find that the

lack of difference in self-labeling and preferred labeling by others is also a reflection of

white power.

Social psychologists who focus on defining and measuring identity have used social identity theory to treat white racial identity much like they have done to study any other dominant group identity. Scholars in this field argue that identity forms in relation to other participants in the environment and is a fluid and dynamic identity that is likely to change (Ellemers et al. 2002). Helms (1990) developed and tested several scales measuring white racial identity. She proposes a theory of stages in which whites go through internalizing a racial identity with the final stage being a rejection of racism and an acceptance of a "nonracist core" (Helms 1990:52). Although her findings have been criticized for recounting "how whites develop different levels of sensitivity and appreciation of other racial/ethnic groups, but little about a white identity" (Rowe, Bennett and Atkinson 1994:131), Helms's measurements of white racial identity continue to be used as one of the standard scales.

Historically, "whiteness" was considered the ethnic norm, and as a result, many white Americans lost touch with their family heritages. They had cast off the very elements of their identity, which distinguished them from other white people. They no longer identified themselves as people from a particular European background; instead, they primarily saw themselves as American. It was this new American identity that defined their everyday existence (Martin 1997; Song 2003). In a way, whiteness, rather than individual white ethnicities, grew in importance as a response to those who were not white. Whiteness, as a social construction, was then to be defined and negotiated in this context. By identifying with a larger, more united group, whites felt more secure in

an increasingly multicultural environment.

Many, if not most, whites, however, have retained elements of their ethnic identity, although in a more diminished capacity. Alba (2000) points out that although ethnic distinctions among whites had decreased, one should not assumed that identification with a particular ethnicity would disappear. Similar to race, ethnic options for white European Americans differ from options for ethnic minorities in the United States generally because white racial identity allows leeway for a wider range of ethnic options (Waters 1990; Kibria 2000). Furthermore, the ways in which race and ethnicity are often conflated, the terms "white" and "American" are also confounded due to the cultural dominance of European Americans in the U.S. (Devos and Banaji 2005). The racial privilege and power that white Americans have in the U.S. allows for the privileged dominant group to define and represent "American". In this way, American has been equated with being white according to the group definition of the dominant white group. Additionally, the cultural dominance of whites also fosters a sense of ethnic privilege and ethnocentrism that allows whites to not consider their ethnicity. In the same way that whites do not have to attend to their race, white culture, as the dominant group, becomes the norm of "American culture" and ethnicity simply becomes a matter of choice rather than expectation.

"Symbolic ethnicity", coined by Herbert Gans in 1979 "is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (p.9). For whites the decision to identify with a particular ethnic

group in whole or in part is entirely up to the person, whereas a person of color is expected to identify with a particular ethnic group by society because of the conflation of race and ethnicity. Because the need or pressure to pay close attention to one's ethnic identity for whites is low, ethnic culture and organizations are replaced by this symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979). Ethnic behaviors, attitudes, and identity are not only determined by the individual or that particular ethnic group, but also by the society at large by placing costs and benefits of being "ethnic" at a particular time and place.

In many ways ethnic identity for whites of European descent has been used as a stand-in identity for race. Being part of a European ethnic group is frequently correlated with being white, which allows one to have full access to privilege and power that non-white groups do not have. For some whites, the process of becoming white comes at the expense of ethnic identity. European immigrants traveled to the U.S. without being aware of the color divide and quickly learned that the "price of the ticket" for full admission into U.S. society was "to become white" (Baldwin 1998:177-180). In the process of becoming white, many European immigrants lost a sense of their cultural histories and ties, in part due to the fact that anything "ethnic" became something that represented the "other" or non-white (Baldwin 1998). Therefore, participation in the process of becoming "white" or "American" forced immigrant communities of Irish, Italian, Jews, Poles and others to let go of their culture (Roediger 1998). According to Guglielmo (2003), European immigrants and their families were faced with a moral choice immediately upon arrival, either to fully embrace whiteness by letting go of cultural ties or holding onto ethnic identity by denying whiteness and all privilege and

status that comes along with being white. Whether a conscious choice or societal pressure, the ways in which race rather than ethnicity provided privilege and status allowed race to become the more salient identity for whites of European descent.

INTERRACIAL INTIMACY AND IDENTITY

Studies on interracial couples and their families have recently become more visible, particularly in the fields of sociology and psychology. Interracial, black-white, intermarriage in particular has a lengthy presence in scholarship, primarily documenting the existence and reasons for these relationships, the role of legal institutions in promoting and sanctioning these relationships, and a discussion of identity development. This section aims to examine studies that have focused on interracial couples and that include discussions of racial or ethnic identities. However, it must be noted that much of the research about interracial couples is rooted in essentialist discussions about blacks and whites, with a particular focus on deviance. Furthermore, much of that research has not only been primarily focused on black-white relationships, but about intermarried relationships after the 1967 Supreme Court ruling that eliminated legally codified restrictions on interracial marriage (e.g., Heer 1974).

Research conducted by Anita Foeman and Teresa Nance (1999) notes that people in interracial couples go through four stages in these relationships in addition to developmental stages undergone by other couples: (1) racial awareness, (2) coping with social definitions of race, (3) identity emergence, and (4) maintenance. Racial awareness refers to the time during which people of different races become attracted to

one another and is composed of four types of awareness – theirs, that of their partner's, the collective racial group identity, and collective racial group of their partner. The second stage, coping with the social definitions of race, is when people learn to incorporate the awareness learned in the first stage into their relationship. The third stage, identity emergence, refers to the time during which the couple redefines their relationship's racial makeup as positive. Lastly, the fourth stage, maintenance, focuses on the couples' learned strategies of relationship maintenance. Foeman and Nance (1999) also argue that individuals in ongoing interracial relationships develop a racial awareness or consciousness that may have been unachievable to either partner in same-race relationships. In this way, partners gain insight about oneself, each other, and develop a worldview in relation to one's race and ethnicity. Moreover, developments and shifts in identity may also vary depending on where each individual is in the process of developing his or her own racial and/or ethnic identities prior to entering their current interracial relationship, as well as other factors such as age, generational status, gender, etc.

Within research on interracial relationships and marriages, color-blindness is a recurring theme. One study conducted by Yanick St. Jean (1998) emphasizes that people in interracial couples characterize their relationships as "not racial" and suggest that because they are part of a color-blind society, they do not see their relationship as racial or composed of people of different races. Additionally, a study by Richard Lewis Jr., George Yancey and Siri Bletzer (1997) found that participants in their study claimed that factors not associated with race were more important in their spouse selection

process, supporting beliefs that race did not matter and pushing issues related to race further into the backstage. Lewis, Yancey and Bletzer (1997) conclude that the assumptions based on the racialization of black male bodies as animalistic and predatory on white women is no longer a factor affecting intimate relationships across racial lines. In an attempt to avoid minimizing interracial relationships to nothing more than sexual attraction, the authors make questionable assumptions, including viewing sexual and racial attractiveness as parts of the "true essence" of a person and assuming that mate selection based on these factors is a conscious process isolated from the racist beliefs pervasive in American society.

A qualitative study conducted by Betty Lee Sung (1990) found that when interviewing Asian Americans married to whites, they were more likely to voice a strong ethnic pride. Additionally, Mok (1999) conducted a quantitative study of Asian American dating patterns that concluded that ethnic identity was a significant predictor of the likelihood of dating other Asian Americans, but was not significant in predicting the likelihood of dating whites. Although these studies indicate that racial and ethnic identities are important factors in interracial dating, there are few studies that explore the effect and influence of these relationships on the actual racial and ethnic identities of individuals in interracial relationships and marriages.

The ways in which others perceive interracial couples is one of many social contexts influencing the racial and ethnic identities of individuals in interracial relationships. For example, a study by Donna Lewandowski and Linda Jackson (2001) investigated how 229 white undergraduates at a university in the Midwest perceived

interracial couples and what their thoughts were on racial prejudice. They found that the perception of interracial couples depended on the racial/gender composition of the couples. In other words, responses varied depending on which racial/ethnic groups were coupled and the gender of these partners. Results showed that couples were perceived as less compatible when the non-white partner was black, but not when the non-white partner was Asian American. Additionally, they found that white men who married outside of their own race were identified as having a strong racial identity and white privilege, as well as being perceived as more race conscious. Particularly, men of color who married outside of their own group were seen as "sell outs" with weak racial identities and were perceived to be less professionally competent (Lewandowski and Jackson 2001).

According to Diane Felmlee and Susan Sprecher (2000), the development of an individual's self-identity varies depending on whether the individual is in a committed relationship. Similarly, they find that the racial and/or ethnic identities of individuals in interracial couples are likely to shift in different ways depending on the nature of the relationship and the influence each partner has on the other. In this way, individuals in interracial relationships may have to negotiate and reexamine their own racial and/or ethnic identities in more ways than individuals in same-race relationships. Furthermore, a qualitative study by Miriam Hill and Volker Thomas (2000) examined how women in interracial, black-white, relationships defined their racial identity. They found that the four white women and the three black men described actively engaging in the development of racial identity by "rejecting constraining narratives and identifying with

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empowering narratives" (p.196). In other words, these respondents adopted different strategies to block and transform imposed identities. In doing so, respondents rejected imposed identities and generated new and empowering ones. In addition, Hill and Thomas (2000) found that blacks partnered with whites were more likely to be questioned and challenged by others blacks about their racial identity.

IMPOSED IDENTITIES

I argue that in certain contexts, some people will be encouraged, if not coerced, into self-monitoring in ways that are unequal to others. To do so, the boundaries to imposed identities must be interrogated. That is, some people are more socially constrained than others. Michelle Lamont (1992) examined the cultural categories through which upper-middle class French and American men defined the cultural they valued, taking into consideration the boundaries drawn by people in order to categorize themselves and others. In her research, she found three types of boundaries: moral, cultural and socioeconomic (Lamont 1992). Furthermore, Lamont's (1992) work discusses the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of people within a group and concludes that boundary work is an important component of the process of "constituting the self and developing a sense of group membership" (p.11). Thus, the process of distinction, where boundaries are created to differentiate and recognize the self, generates a level of satisfaction in which the desire to be recognized as unique is met. In this way, group membership is established (Lamont 1992).

Just as the self is embedded in culture and context, it is racialized, gendered and influenced by class status. Therefore, some identity projects are more privileged than others. Using Stryker's (1994) ideas of freedom and constraint, some people experience more freedom while others experience greater constraint, influencing their identity projects. Thus, freedom and constraint function as ways of limiting access to identity projects which are not mainstream leading people to accept the imposed identities linked to racialized and gendered categories. For example, in a dichotomous and racialized society like that of the U.S., individuals do not necessarily *choose* to be black in America, they are born into it as an ascribed category generally imposed on a person based on skin color and historical oppression. As a result, individuals do not initially choose their racial classification bur rather it is an imposed identity based on physical characteristics. The boundaries of what it means to be "black" and what it means to *not* be white in the social structure of the U.S. are then established and in general function to privilege white people. For people of Latin American descent, the boundaries are different, but often they are placed in separate "honorary white" (Bonilla-Silva 2002) or "off-white" (Gómez 2007) categories while still giving them the ability to move in and out of blackness and rarely into whiteness.

Institutions force identities on people by placing significant pressure on people to adopt a sense of self based on components linked to the dominant characteristics valued within that institution. Thus, people from underrepresented groups are forced to make a choice either to accept those characteristics of the self to help them navigate the institution; to avoid the institutionally imposed characteristics and be punished or

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unrecognized; or to leave the institution altogether. Additionally, individuals not only

seek to control situational meanings of their own self (Burke 1991; Stryker and Burke

2000), they also control the meanings of the situation for others by creating meaning

around the identities of others and, thus, imposing an identity on them.

Alicia D. Cast's (2003) research on newly married couples and the effect of

power, based on partner's relative position in the marriage's power structure, shows that

individuals define the situation in three ways: (1) they control meanings in the situation

by acting consistent with their identity; (2) they control meanings by imposing identities

on others; and, (3) control meanings by resisting identities that are imposed on them by

others. Furthermore, Cast (2003) takes into consideration the relative power of both

partners in the marriage that affects their ability to control and define the situation. She

also concludes that social context must be taken into consideration when researching the

self and other processes related to the self, including defining the self and others, and

that "those with power are able to assert themselves and impose their own definitions of

the situation on others, thus potentially reproducing and maintaining the structural

arrangements that privilege them" (Cast 2003:198). Moreover, in examining the relative

power of individuals in romantic relationships, particularly among couples who differ in

their racial and ethnic self-identification and who are already positioned in the racial

hierarchy, we must also interrogate the mechanisms through which relative power is

established, exercised, and reproduced.

Antonio Gramsci (2000) theorized that dominant groups maintain their positions of power via a mix of force (through coercion) and consent from subordinate groups[21]. For Gramsci (2000) hegemony is a social order where "a common social-moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant, informing with its spirit all modes of thought and behavior" (Femia 1981:24). Thus, hegemony is not solely achieved through the free choices of subordinate groups, rather, consent is actively manufactured and is coerced through "extremely complex mediums, diverse institutions, and constantly changing processes" (Buttigieg 1995:7). In particular, those in the dominant group participate in a variety of institutions, activities, and social interactions that help the dominant group lead society in a certain direction (Buttigieg 2005). Thus, hegemony functions through social institutions in society (e.g., religious and educational institutions, the press, and all other social actors) who help develop a set of expectations and behaviors compatible with hegemonic social order. In this way, for Gramsci, civil society does not have freedom but is rather deeply imbedded in hegemony (Buttigieg 1995) with two ways of challenging hegemony: a "war of maneuver" (physically attacking the coercive social actors of the dominant class) and a "war of position" (resistance to domination through culture and behavior rather than physical violence) (Gramsci 2007).

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[21] Gramsci theorized primarily on the intellectual and cultural struggle between anti-capitalist proletariat and the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie, however, his examination of force through coercion among dominant groups is relevant to this work in that it illustrates the prevalence of these same tactics in the subordination of racial and ethnic minorities via white supremacy.

Similarly, dominant groups in the racial hierarchy (i.e., non-Hispanic whites) force those in subordinate groups (e.g., people of color; for the purposes of this study, Latin@s of Mexican descent) to consent to the racial-power hierarchy in existence that continues to subjugate people of color while continuing to elevate whites to top positions with access to social capital and material resources. In the case of Latin@s, this is done through the imposition of pan-ethnic/pan-racial terms such as "Hispanic" and "Latin@" which force a group of individuals with similar cultural, historical, and language characteristics into a category that makes them seem homogenous[22]. This chapter will then discuss how those in the dominant racial group, in this case whites, control the power to give meaning to a situation (Cast 2003), in this case, determine what identities to use for their partners of Mexican descent. Furthermore, I will also examine the ways in which the Mexican partners reject and declare alternative identities (Betancur and Herring 2013). In particular, I argue that intimate, romantic spaces, generally considered the safest and most innocuous, are in actuality one of the most coercive racial spaces while simultaneously acting as spaces of resistance against white hegemony.

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[22] Much has been written about the heterogeneity of Latin@s, including Nelson and Tienda (1997), Oboler (1997), Meier and Melton (2012), Ortego y Gasca (2006), del Pinal and Singer (1997), and Guarnaccia et al. (2007) among others.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This research project in so many ways is a product of years of interest in a subject that is very personal to me as a mixed race individual of Mexican and white parents, and the effect of their particular social and geographical context on their racial and ethnic identities, and my own. Additionally, in migrating from Mexico to the United States when I was 19 years old to pursue my bachelor's degree, I was confronted with problematizing my own racial and ethnic identities, as well as those of my parents and brother, by reflecting on how these operated both in Mexico and the United States. I became more aware of how my identity was perceived and often imposed by my peers, how I identified myself, and how these identities played out in multiple ways depending on whom I interacted with. It is through these experiences that I was able to conclude that identity is complex and needs further researching. Moreover, as I started working on this project, I found a scarcity of scholarly literature available, in particular qualitative research, about the role of romantic, intimate relationships in shaping identity; as well as a prevalence in race scholarship focused on black-white and Asian-white romantic relationships and a lack of focus of Latin@-white relationships. This chapter examines the methodological development, data collection, analytic procedure, and methodological reflection.

METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

My interest in qualitative research for this particular project lies in exploring how personal accounts on issues of identity construction, formation, retention and reproduction reflect a larger process of racialization. Additionally, because qualitative methodology has the ability to investigate in-depth or abstract concepts that may be difficult to quantify (Hoepfl 1997) and because it seeks to answer *what*, *where*, and *when* questions as well as the *whys* and *how's* (Fontana and Frey 2005; Gubrium and Holstein 2001) it is particularly suited for this project. Furthermore, at the core of qualitative methods is an emphasis on lived experiences, the significance of context, the process of creating and producing meaning, and the processes of human interaction (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

Moreover, because this research project is dedicated to understanding individuals' lived experiences as situated in specific socioeconomic, historic, and political contexts, it employs the grounded theory (GT) method (Glaser 1978, 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987), which permits researchers to cultivate a theoretical account of general descriptions of a specific topic while concurrently anchoring the account in firsthand observation data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Because GT seeks to develop categories from close and systematic reviews of data, this type of data analysis includes as much detail as possible to really showcase everything related to and beyond the data (Strauss 1987). In comparison to other methods, GT does not seek to establish relationships between key variables prior to research. Instead, it is a method used to generate and elaborate theory through a close examination of data (Emerson

2001). At the core of this project is a bottom-up approach in which respondents define

their own experiences, and tell the researcher what they deem important and relevant. In

this way, I, as the researcher, avoid imposing my own ideas and assumptions upon

participants and their experiences.

Indeed, GT is appropriate for this research project because this project serves to

generate both rich descriptions (Geertz 1973) and categorized conceptualizations of the

challenges that interracial couples encounter in their relationships and among their peers.

Furthermore, when using grounded theory in the development of theory, the kind of

evidence and the number of cases take a backseat to the development of conceptual

categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data for this dissertation comes from 90 in-depth, semi-structured

interviews with 50 Mexican-white couples in Brazos County (20 couples, 40 interviews),

San Antonio (10 couples, 18 interviews), Austin (10 couples, 16 interviews), and

Houston (10 couples, 16 interviews), conducted from 2009-2010 and 2012-2013. By

using a comparative method, this research project seeks to determine the impact of

geographical location and area size on racialization and the differences in identity

formation in areas with different racial histories. In particular, this research examines

the effect of a broader geographical location (Texas), a smaller geographical location

(specific areas within Texas), area size (comparing a small-to-medium metropolitan area

such as the Brazos County to large metropolitan areas such as San Antonio, Austin, and

Houston), and being part of an interracial partnership (intimate space) on the production and reproduction of racial and/or ethnic identities in contemporary American society.

In-depth interviews were particularly suited for this project because of the expectation that they will not only yield the richest information regarding identity, but because they are instrumental in demonstrating how individuals learn and negotiate meaning (Gubrium and Holstein 2001: Lofland and Lofland 1995), in this case, specifically with regards to identity. Furthermore, because the interviews were open-ended and semi-structured, they more closely resembled a "guided conversation" (Kvale 1996) in which rapport was established more quickly with participants and follow up questions or comments were permissible within the interview structure.

Sampling and Recruitment

For this study, participant selection was determined by criterion sampling, which "reviews and studies cases that meet some pre-set criterion of importance" (Commonwealth Educational Media Centre 2011). This pre-set criterion of importance includes: (1) residing either in the Brazos County, San Antonio, Austin, or Houston for a period of at least 12 consecutive months; (2) either being in a long-term heterosexual relationship (defined as being together for a period of three years or more) or a marriage that is interracial, defined by this research as Mexican-white despite each individual's self-identification (where one partner is of Mexican descent [but can racially and ethnically identify in any way as long as there is Mexican descent] and the other partner

is of non-Spanish/Portuguese European descent [again, self-identifying in any way]); and, (3) are individuals 18 years or older.

To recruit participants, I began with snowball sampling methodology, where a sample of people is drawn from a given population (Goodman 1961) generally through recruitment from personal networks who then help to look within their own networks for individuals who fit the criteria for the project, and so on and so forth until the desired population is reached. Working within my own network during Phase I of data collection (Brazos County, 2009-2010), proved to be more difficult than anticipated. As a result, the criterion for the extended project was modified in the first stages of data collection in Brazos County to include relationships as well as marriages[23]. Initially, data collection for the Phase II (2012-2013) was only set to take place in San Antonio, where the recruitment process was modified to not only consider snowball sampling (with limits of three referrals per couple interviewed so as to not generate an overall homogenous population rooted within the same network), given the prior difficulties and limitations of snowball sampling, but to include the distribution of recruitment materials to a variety of organizations, universities, businesses, and religious institutions, approximating about 250 physical and electronic locations in San Antonio. Between May and October 2012, information sheets, recruitment flyers, calls for participation,

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[23] The initial scope of this project called for interrogating racial and ethnic identity among Mexican-white *married* couples. However, because of recruitment difficulties and the limits of my social networks, with the help of my thesis advisor, the criteria for selection was modified to include relationships, with the stipulation that these relationships be of at least 3 years in length to prove longevity and the intent of a long-term commitment.

Facebook notes, forum posts, etc., were distributed in and around San Antonio and recruitment announcements were posted on a variety of webpages and social media.

Recruitment efforts in some locations were more productive than others, including the use of the TexAgs online forum, from which several couples were recruited. In order to avoid a homogenized, Texas A&M University-based or affiliated population, the number of couples recruited via this webpage was limited to no more than three couples recruited through this medium per location of research (as further modifications were made to recruitment protocol, this was extended to obtaining no more than three couples per snowball per location). Recruitment attempts were also made via telephone and in person in San Antonio and despite all of these efforts, finding participants became a long and difficult process that speaks more to the limitations of my recruitment protocol than of the availability of couples fitting the criteria. This lead to an additional modification to the data and methodology—extending this project beyond Brazos County and San Antonio to include Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston, locations that are demographically significant in terms of the Latin@ presence and which are also important historical locations (Dallas/Fort Worth was later removed because of time constraints and limited networks, but I intend to address this location in the future). Similar recruitment practices were used in these new locations—posting on online forums and social media outlets, distributing flyers to organizations, universities, churches and individuals, and calling and visiting locations in order to gain permission to post recruitment materials or distribute them through listservs.

Demographics of Sample

Table 1 below outlines the basic demographics of the sample. Table 2 examines racial and ethnic self-identification among Mexican partners by gender. And, Table 3 examines racial and ethnic self-identification among white partners by gender.

Table 1: Demographic Information					
	San Antonio	Austin	Houston	Brazos County	General
Marital Status					
% Married	70	70	50	50	58
% In Relationship	30	30	50	50	42
Length of relationship by marital status					
Average length of relationship, married couples (years)	11.43	13.6	10.2	14.1	12.7
Average length of relationship, non-married couples (years)	4	4.7	6	4.6	4.9
Age (%)					
< 20	0	0	5	0	1
20-30	50	40	15	45	39
30-40	20	25	30	32.5	28
40-50	20	25	45	10	22
50-60	10	10	5	2.5	6
60+	0	0	0	10	4
	Avg. 34.1	Avg. 37.8	Avg. 35.3	Avg. 35.6	Avg. 35.6
Education (%)					
< High School	0	0	5	2.5	2%
High School	15	15	40	22.5	23%
Some College	15	10	10	10	11%
College	40	35	35	50	42%
Grad/Professional	30	40	10	15	22%
Socioeconomic Status (%)					
Upper class	0	0	0	0	0%
Upper middle class	45	50	35	20	34%
Lower middle class	40	35	35	55	44%
Working Class	15	10	25	17.5	17%
Underclass	0	5	5	7.5	5%
	N = 20	N = 20	N = 20	N = 40	N = 100

Table 2. Self Identification (Mexican Respondents)											
	San Antonio		Austin		Houston		Brazos County		Total By Gender		Collective Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Race (%)											
Hispanic	30	20	0	0	0	20	35	25	33.33	45	38
Mexican	10	0	40	0	30	20	15	5	36.67	15	28
Mexican American	0	0	20	0	0	0	15	0	16.67	0	10
Latin@/Hispanic	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.33	5	4
Latin@	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	5	0	15	6
Hispanic and Mexican American	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	5	2
White	0	10	10	10	20	0	0	0	10	10	10
None	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2
	N = 5	N = 5	N = 7	N = 3	N = 5	N = 5	N = 13	N = 7	N = 30	N = 20	N = 50
Ethnicity (%)											
Mexican	30	40	70	30	40	40	60	30	52	34	86
Hispanic	10	10	0	0	0	10	5	0	4	4	8
Mexican American	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Mexican Indigenous	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	0	2
More than one	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	2	0	2
	N = 5	N = 5	N = 7	N = 30	N = 5	N = 5	N = 14	N = 6	N = 31	N = 19	N = 50

Table 3. Self Identification (White Respondents)										
	San Antonio		Austin		Houston		Brazos County		Total	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Race (%)										
White	50	30	30	70	50	50	35	60	40	54
Anglo	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
White / European / Anglo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	2
None	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	N = 10		N = 10		N = 10		N = 20		N = 50	
Ethnicity (%)										
White	40	60	33.3	57.1	60	60	28.6	30.8	40	47
Anglo	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.3
Native American	40	0	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	15	0
Irish / Irish American	0	0	0	14.3	0	20	0	15.4	0	13.3
American	0	0	0	0	0	0	28.6	0	10	0
Greek	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
English	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	15.4	0	10
Polish	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	3.3
German	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15.4	0	6.7
Croatian	0	0	0	0	0	0	14.3	0	5	0
Cajun	0	0	0	0	0	0	14.3	0	5	0
Honorary Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.7	0	3.3
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.7	0	3.3
More than one ethnicity										
German + Irish	0	0	0	0	0	0	14.3	7.7	5	3.3
German + Polish	0	0	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
German + English	0	0	0	14.3	0	0	0	0	0	3.3
German + English + Swiss	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	5	0
English + Irish	0	0	0	14.3	0	0	0	0	0	3.3
Russian + Swedish	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	5	0
	N = 5	N = 5	N = 3	N = 7	N = 5	N = 5	N = 7	N = 13	N = 20	N = 30

Interview Process

The final sample for the entire project (2009-2010 and 2012-2013) consists of 50 Mexican-white couples (100 respondents with a total of 90 interviews[24]), 29 of which were married couples and 21 of which were in romantic relationships with a duration of at least 3 years. Similarly to the interview process in Phase I (2009-2010 in Brazos County), the interviews for Phase II (2012-2013 in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio) were conducted with individuals rather than couples to enable comfort among respondents, as well as to guarantee the absence of the partner's external influence through their presence on the respondent. However, ten couples (two in San Antonio, four in Austin, four in Houston) were interviewed together either because of time constraints or at the request of the couple. The data from these 10 couples was not discarded nor considered null, but rather the physical expressions, gestures, and non-verbal cues of these respondents were especially observed to account for discomfort, control, policing of responses, etc. Overall, for all 50 couples their behaviors, facial expressions, gestures, overall body language, and non-audio recorded comments were also examined and included as data in this project.

Phase I of data collection in 2009-2010 consisted of 40 interviews conducted either in the respondent's home or in public spaces such as coffee shops and parks. For Phase II, I originally intended for all San Antonio interviews to take place in a neutral location and requested the assistance of various libraries throughout the city, including

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[24] Ten couples chose not to interview separately, thus explaining the discrepancy between number of respondents and number of interviews.

the University of Texas San Antonio and the Texas A&M San Antonio campus libraries. Librarians in both of these locations were extremely helpful in working with this project; however, participants expressed their preference in meeting in public locations close to their work or home, such as coffee shops and bookstores, regardless of the potential for noise and lack of privacy. As I moved the project to include Austin and Houston, this also became true of these locations.

Interviews lasted anywhere between 45 minutes and three hours, and, with the consent of the participants, they were audio-recorded (not all participants consented to audio-recording; in these cases, extensive field notes and annotations were made to ensure the most accurate representations of these couples). All participants were allowed to withdraw their participation from the study at any time or to not answer questions if they did not feel comfortable answering them; however, everyone participated fully, albeit with resistance at times. In order to ensure confidentiality, respondents' names were changed and the interviews and notes are kept in a secured file. The majority of the interviews were conducted in English, however, some respondents preferred or felt more comfortable speaking Spanish or mixing the two languages, which as a bilingual individual I was able to accommodate. For the most part, the individuals in the couple were interviewed one following the other or with very few interviews having any significant time lapse between interviews, facilitating travel for me.

Interview Structure

This qualitative project consisted of 90 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 50 couples. The interviews were organized with questions set in increasing order of sensitivity in order to establish rapport with the interviewee. The first section discusses their family, upbringing, ancestry, and family stories, gathering information on family of origin, not only gaining rapport through childhood stories, but also as a way of gaining insight into what the respondents' family structure was like in the past, and how that has been influential in that individual's understanding and development of their identity as well as its effects on their current relationship. Additionally, questions about holidays, religious affiliation, traditions, language, gastronomy and other perceived ethnic cultural activities and characteristics were asked in this section.

The second section dug deeper into the respondents' conceptualization of what race and ethnicity mean, how they conceptualize their own racial and ethnic identification, and how they perceived incidents relating to race and ethnicity, including prejudice, discrimination, racialization, privilege, and proximity to a variety of groups. Furthermore, this section also documents how participants identified as children, how they learned to identify that way, if they have consciously noticed any changes or shifts in their identities, and how and through which mechanisms it is that they learned about their specific identities.

The third section explicitly asked respondents about their first impressions or thoughts regarding Latinas, Latinos, white men, and white women and how it is that these conceptualizations were thought of, how they developed, and often whether they

believed the stereotypes to be true. Additionally, this section included questions about gender, class, family, children, current friendship groups, interaction with family members and community, and the navigation of different social contexts.

Lastly, field notes were developed through the collection of data to allow for the recognition of factors not previously considered and which might uncover and yield important issues. Furthermore, directly after the interview, descriptive memos were written using data from the interview responses and field notes. For a complete interview guide, see Appendix C-1 and C-2.

ANALYTIC PROCEDURE

When I started this project I did not anticipate the multiple layers of analysis that emerged as analysis took place. At the most basic, and anticipated layer, I had access to a large collection of family histories documenting the intergenerational transmission of racial knowledge, including racial and ethnic identification or lack thereof, the characteristics associated with particular racial and ethnic groups, and the ideologies on discrimination and racism as pervasive at the individual level. While this project is primarily qualitative, interviews were coded at the most basic quantitative level (percentages and averages) with regards to demographic information (including age, marital status, level of education, socioeconomic status (defined by occupation, education, and income) racial and ethnic self-identification and what they perceived their partner's racial and ethnic identity to be, perceived skin color by interviewer, and immigrant/generational status).

Moreover, coding also yielded multiple iterations of similar ideologies among both whites and Latin@s, including the use of racial dichotomies consisting of a "good person of x racial category" and a "bad person of x racial category" (mostly used in relation to people of color, with a few exceptions who differentiated between "good whites" and "bad whites"). These types of experiences and ideologies were likewise documented in order to tally and quantitatively account for these. In-depth analysis of these comments is available in Chapter 6, which discusses the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the specific context of the family and includes an examination of the process of learning about race, attributing particular characteristics to a group of people from a racial group (racialization), gendered notions of particular racial groups, and how these are affected by the respondent's socioeconomic status, both previous to their relationship and in their current relationship.

Beyond basic quantitative analysis on demographic characteristics and self-identification, and given the use of grounded theory, I know that my guiding prompts in the interview schedule would provide responses to themes associated with: (1) racial and ethnic self-identification; (2) racial and ethnic identification of partner; (3) the identification of children (if applicable); (4) racialized, gendered, and classed ideas of people from other racial and ethnic groups; and, (5) the intergenerational transmission of racial knowledge (i.e., the reproduction of knowledge surrounding racial and ethnic self-identification, the development racial ideologies (including a varied spectrum ranging from inclusion to exclusion, dependent on racial group) through family narratives, actions, and ideologies regarding people in both the in-group and the out-group). The

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first three themes are central to my interests in the development of racial and ethnic

identity among individuals in interracial couples, in particular in examining how identity

operates within the family, whether in intimate, romantic partnership or because of the

presence of children. The last two themes, although central to the project and related to

the first three themes, are important for the analysis of formal and informal racial

structures and hierarchies present in people's everyday lives, the navigation of these, and

although I expected to gain this information, I never expected the richness of the data

gathered.

Coding

Qualitative coding followed Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory specific coding

structure as well as the Straussian (Strauss 1987; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and

Corbin 1998) school of thought that stresses the importance of induction from qualitative

data, gathering codes from statements and actions associated with the topics under study.

Charmaz (2006) defines coding as the "means naming segments of data with a label that

simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (p.43) and

is a crucial component of data sorting for analysis. The codes, closely defined by the

data, indicate action, events, context, viewpoints, discourse, emotion, and because I

employ grounded theory, the codes come directly from the interpretation of data rather

than seeking how the data fits a particular framework. Grounded theory coding then is

the analytic foundation of this project and the actions and processes exemplified in the

data create theory.

As such, coding for this project consisted of several stages completed with the assistance of two research assistants for the purposes of triangulating data (Denzin 1970), inter-coder reliability (Armstrong et al. 1997), and generating as many codes and data interpretations as possible. Stage I, comprised of open coding, involved reading through each segment of data and asking, "What is this data a study of?" (Glaser 1978:57; Glaser and Strauss 1967); What does the data suggest or pronounce? From whose point of view is this? (Charmaz 2006:47); and, what category does this data suggest? (Glaser 1978). Open coding firstly recognizes, categorizes, and groups into categories related with that which is being studied. This usually involves a constant comparison of data with labels until "conceptual saturation" is achieved, denoted by an agreement that the chosen label fits the pattern (Glaser 2002:24). Therefore, initial coding looks at the direct action taking place rather than attaching preexisting categories to the data. Thus, as frequently as possible, data was coded as an action because it "curbs our tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories *before* we have done the necessary analytic work" (Charmaz 2006:48). This openness to initial coding allows for critical thought and for the emergence of new ideas during the analytic process. These codes then let data directly speak by being temporary, fluid, comparative and grounded directly in the data. Moreover, this approach allows researchers to learn throughout the coding process. The emphasis in learning throughout the process is particularly shown in this project through a team research approach for triangulation, reliability and interpretation, "data are independently coded and the codings compared for agreement" (Armstrong et al. 1997:597) during Stage II, focused coding. This

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acknowledges the research's openness to multiple analytic possibilities and creates codes that better fit the data, as well as creating a space for analytic discourse. Furthermore, analytic discourse in team research prompts us as researchers to acknowledge significant gaps and limitations in research design, data collection, and data. Moreover, Stage I, open coding, follows Charmaz's (2006) guidelines for coding incident by incident instead of word by word or line by line coding because of the level of abstraction and the purpose for collecting data.

Focused coding makes up the first part of Stage II in order to "synthesize and explain larger segments of data" (Charmaz 2006:57). All three coders met face to face and each incident was combed through collectively to find the most significant and/or frequent codes to determine the adequacy of the larger data set. Doing so, allows researchers to compare the experiences, actions and interpretations found in multiple interviews or observations, as well as supporting the collective creation of coding categories. Within Stage II, axial coding was conducted to organize the open codes into a "coding paradigm," a framework, which makes connections between categories and subcategories (Charmaz 2006). That is, the purpose in grounded theory is not the establishment of a set of thematic codes by which the data is classified, but rather to define the underlying narrative found in the relationships connecting the categories (Creswell 1998). Thus, the researcher seeks the ideas that subjects have about how core categories are related to each other with the purpose of noting how a rich story emerges from the relationships drawn from the data by answering questions such as "when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences" (Strauss and Corbin 1998:125). In

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other words, the purpose of axial coding is to convert text into concepts and creating frameworks that extend the overall picture of the data. This was a crucial part of team coding—after individual open coding, we met as a research team and discussed codes incident by incident and collectively developing concepts and frameworks. Once concepts were determined, the research team reconvened to isolate the codes that exemplified each concept and framework. This project did not employ axial coding directly following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) procedure (an explicit frame did not guide analytic constructions during the coding process), but rather developed subcategories and showed the links between them with particular focus on the questions posited above by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

In its inception, and especially after receiving grants to support this research, this project was also intended to serve as a multi-layered methodological teaching and learning experience for my research assistants and myself. The purpose of this approach was to give undergraduate research assistants first-hand experience with qualitative data analysis, manual coding procedural instruction, data analysis memo writing, and a group learning effort to use qualitative coding software, ATLAS.ti. However, due to time and monetary constraints, we manually coded all interviews, created categories, wrote memos during and after coding, determined significant findings, and wrote personal reflections on the data gathered[25].

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[25] Observations and reflections from memos will be used as an eventual publication on the effects of data gathering and personal narratives, researcher positionality, and conducting data analysis in the social sciences in public spaces where strangers would interject themselves into the process, consciously and unconsciously. Additionally, this

Memo Writing

Memos were written at three different times in the data collection and analysis process: (1) directly following the interview; (2) directly following individual coding; and (3) immediately after comparing data findings and interpretations with the undergraduate research assistants. The purpose of multiple phases of memo writing was to compare the interpretation of information at different points in time while simultaneously systematically organizing and unifying information and highlighting points of interest generated from the data and research process. Additional memos were written by undergraduate research assistants during the process of compiling notecards and interview data to create visuals (familiograms) for this dissertation. These memos served the purpose of discussing research and data as post-traumatic stress and microaggressions for people of color involved in research.

Following Charmaz's (2006) coding method for grounded theory, creating memos after coding became central to narrowing codes to theory producing analytic state. I wrote memos immediately after individually coding interview transcripts. The research assistants were indicated to do the same following coding of the same interviews (each interview was coded by the two research assistants and myself, as both a means of triangulating data and as a teaching and training mechanism for the research assistants). Research assistants were indicated to compose memos based on interview

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future publication will also discuss research and data analysis as conducive to post-traumatic stress and an overwhelming amount of emotional labor generally in the form of microagressions affecting people of color involved in various steps of research analysis.

findings (collapsing incidents together and describing them succinctly) as well as a means of documenting how data analysis affected them personally, including a discussion of how data can be a set of microaggressions towards people of color involved in research. Following individual coding of 10 interviews (5 couples), the three of us would meet in a public space (coffee shop) to discuss findings, points of interest, microaggressions, reactions, etc. During this time we would dedicate 5-8 hours comparing codes for these 10 interviews from each of us, discussing the importance of specific comments, noting our reactions towards the responses, as well as how we were perceived when conducting research analysis of a sensitive topic like race in a public, predominantly white space. Research assistants were also told to write memos of any public reactions to the coding process, including people interjecting themselves into the data analysis by asking us about the research or sharing their own personal experiences, as well as non-verbal, physical intimidation tactics employed by whites overhearing our discussions. For more information on memos written after coding and after publicly comparing codes, see the section on methodological reflection, below, which includes excerpts of memos written by the research assistants and myself.

Next, I wrote memos immediately after comparing coding with the research assistants as a way of comparing codes, examining reliability/validity among coders, and organizing themes as they emerged.   As principal investigator of the project I wrote memos about each interview as a strategy of analyzing and organizing data and codes early on in the process. Memo writing is an important step in the analytic process as it often enables side-by-side "comparisons between data, data and codes, codes of data and

other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating

conjectures about these comparisons" (Charmaz 2006:72).

Coding memos began as quickly written reactions to narratives that then

developed into categories, codes and data, linking statements, feelings, and narratives to

more abstract concepts. For example, reading transcripts of Mexican born respondents

self-identifying as "Mexican" and reading their reactions and frustrations with the

standardized process of racial identification in the United States via panethnic terms

such as "Hispanic" and "Latin@" coupled with how their partner's identified them, I

established "imposed Hispanicity" (see Chapter 7 for a deeper discussion) as a category

that necessitated further analysis. I determined that racial identity among people of

Mexican descent living in Texas went beyond self-identification practices, and

constituted a more politicized and deeply rooted process in a structure often invisible or

ignored.

After all interviews were coded, the research assistants and myself revisited the

interviews to discuss the organization of the codes, their relevance to the project, and

focused on categorizing each code thematically to gain a broader view of the most

discussed themes. At this point, one research assistant was put in charge of creating

notecards with the interview quotes and their corresponding codes/themes as a way of

organizing common codes/themes together. The second research assistant was given the

responsibility of creating visual diagrams of each couple (familiograms—coded family

trees), representing as much of the couple's family history as was available from

interview data.

METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Methodologically, this project not only takes into consideration observations made during interviewing with participants and those compiled during the systematic coding of data, but also includes situating the research team in dialogue with the rich data found in these interviews, making observations of our surroundings as we coded data and had in-depth discussions about race and ethnicity in a public space (coffee shop) in a predominantly white area of Texas (Brazos County). To do so, the coding team, comprised of two undergraduate research assistants and myself felt the need to reflect on the responses we often found to be the most introspective and the most offensive. What started off joking as, "I feel we should write about the PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] we will come out with after reading the interviews for this project," turned into a conversation of our own positionality, our own reactions, reflections, parallels to our personal lives as Latinas of varying socioeconomic statuses, sexualities, marital statuses, skin colors, immigration experiences, and who have had a variety of partners in and out of our own racial and ethnic groups. As this conversation continued and we made personal connections to our own lives and intergroup interactions, we began thinking about using critical pedagogies and self-reflective strategies (Feagin and Vera 2008; Freire et al. 2000; hooks 1994) as a way of creating a multi-layered study and really inserting ourselves into the research and analytical process.

To consistently reflect and draw connections, we began by systematically taking notes and writing reaction memos (additional to those employed during coding) for comments or statements that particularly drew our attention or caused a reaction and then analyzed them. We concluded as a research team, that often the comments we reacted to the most were the set of direct and indirect micro aggressions stated by interview participants. Comments and documented behavior during the interviews caused intense visceral reactions that to this day as a research team we still comment on, and, which, also support many of the observations and findings documented in this dissertation.

Jennifer Guillén's Research Reflection

I often reflected on how my race was perceived, and often imposed, by interview participants in the same ways that identities were imposed onto Mexican partners. Outside of the content given by participants during the recorded interview, and as a way of establishing rapport, I would briefly mention my personal experience as an individual of mixed race, Mexican and white and my experience migrating to the U.S. from Mexico at 19 years of age. Common reactions included, "You don't *look* Mexican" and "You have *absolutely* no accent," both of which are common reactions in my experiences with Americans and non-Americans. These reactions are clearly contextually and historically based—in the U.S., this is part of a common paradigm of racialization and helps delineate the differences between the "Good Other" and the "Bad Other." Furthermore, it contributes to the reproduction of stereotypical images and behaviors associated with a

particular group, more often than not in an inferiorizing manner. In this case, Mexicans are often visually and behaviorally described as dark-skinned, with dark hair, lacking language and education, and categorized as undocumented immigrants.

Similarly, in Mexico, phenotypical characteristics are often used to racially and socioeconomically categorize individuals. Light-skinned individuals in Mexico are often referred to as "güero" or "güera," terms commonly used to refer to someone who is light-skinned and/or blond or inclusively a foreigner, typically American or European. However, the assumption and stereotyping done by Mexicans that all "güer@s," or light-skinned people, are not "Mexican" reflects the effects of Spanish colonization and the inferiorization of people of color through white supremacy, Spanish "blanqueamiento" ("whitening") policies, and the creation of racial castes. Moreover, the distinction made by Mexicans between "güer@s" and "Mexican@s" demonstrates the persistence of white/European supremacy 500 years after the Spanish imperialism that led to colonization and 200 years after the establishment of Mexico as a country independent of Spanish rule.

Beyond these experiences as a researcher engaging with research participants, as a research team we also noted a variety of incidents during our coding, first our own reactions to the interview data; and, second, reactions from people outside of the research process as we discussed the data in a coffee shop. Below, I will describe both of these types of incidents and then give space for the voices of the two research assistants, Kim Vill and Mariela Flores.

With regards to my reactions to the interview data, it was frankly very difficult to experience these microaggressions as an interviewer, transcriber, coder and research analyst. As an interviewer, I often found myself contemplating my lack of poker face, what my facial reactions and physical cues indicated to the respondents (especially when they said highly offensive things such as racist jokes and inflammatory comments [such comments were plentiful]), and the effect of the responses on my own romantic relationship with my white partner. After interviewing 100 people my research skills have improved to displaying no reaction to these sorts of comments, despite the emotional component of having to face these sorts of microaggressions head on. Reflecting back on these interactions with participants I believe that my light skin color, lack of accent when speaking English evoked or facilitated the ease of these sorts of responses from participants because I was viewed as a non-threatening Latina. Similarly, explaining to Latin@ respondents that I myself am a Latina who is both the product of a Mexican-white coupling and who is in a Mexican-white romantic relationship (although for many I would be considered biracial, I situate my own identity as "Mexican" given my upbringing and experiences growing up in Mexico until I was 19 years old), also facilitated or put Latin@ participants at ease. From the beginning of this project I understood that my positionality and being perceived as non-threatening to both whites and Latin@s as a researcher was an advantage for this project given that I could speak to the experiences of both partners without them feeling like they would be under attack by an "angry Latina" with a "chip on her shoulder" or a "white woman/outsider"

who could be perceived as not understanding the complexities of co-constructing identity, interracial relationships, or navigating both sides.

Second, these same perceptions about my identity during the data collection process also served similar purposes during data analysis in public spaces. While the topics we discussed as a research team often evoked our own feelings, they also provoked public reactions from outsiders interjecting themselves into the research process (without them even knowing that their reactions and interjections would eventually become part of methodological observations). Indeed, we often were forced to engage in conversations about the research topic with people surrounding us, mostly whites who became very uncomfortable or Latin@s who were interested in our observations and comments. There are several experiences that stand out which I will mention in the following paragraphs, first documenting the reactions from whites and then those from Latin@s. The first time we made note of white people's reactions to us, mostly involved "silent"/non-verbal tactics of dissent such as abruptly relocating to a different area of the coffee shop (after these same folks had in a way "invaded" our own personal space by sitting in really close proximity of us), often followed by headshaking, and later escalating to under-breath, unclear mutterings.

The second type of event, related to the first type, involved a more overt policing of space and people of color. While still employing a tactic of silent dissent, we experienced moments where white people physically intimidated us in ways that legally would be categorized as "harmless." For example, during one of our coding meetings, Kim, Mariela and I were sitting in the very center of the coffee shop on three different

couches that created a square-like bubble of Latinas in the middle and everyone else surrounding us. We instantly noticed when an elderly white woman entered the coffee shop wearing a white t-shirt with a huge picture of a bald eagle and the word "America" in big, bold letters. We looked at each other, giggled at the unstated joke (we were all thinking "Amurrri(kkk)a, bang, bang" an ongoing joke about patriotism, whiteness and the American way) before going on with our research discussion. However, we noticed that this woman who initially sat north of us, stared intently for several minutes at us and moved to a table west of us. At first, we thought nothing of her change in location, until she relocated again, within close proximity of us, and continued staring at us. She managed to sit at every table surrounding us before finally leaving, a tactic we attributed to be a power play of white surveillance/policing of brown bodies discussing issues of race (we inclusively switched to discussing the research in Spanish to keep as much of the data and discussion away from her, which only infuriated her more as she began audibly huffing and making other discontented sounds). After she left, we all paused silently, looked at each other in disbelief and admitted feeling intimidated and afraid of this elderly woman, largely in part to our own conceptions of conservative whites in Texas reacting to people of color discussing sensitive topics of race (thinking, "Well, we live in a state that permits conceal and carry and where people *love* their guns, *sigh* we might die because of this.") and then adding fuel to the fire by switching to speaking in Spanish (which whites often feel threatened by people speaking different languages around them because of fears that people are talking about them).

The third type of event we experienced from whites were the direct interjections into the research project, often initiating benignly with comments such as, "Oh, that's a very large stack of papers, what are you working on?" followed by a very vague explanation on our behalf of the basics of the research project. Invariably, these folks attempted to connect with us over the research topic. On one occasion, I remember sitting in a corner with Mariela, one of the research assistants, waiting for our coffee before starting our data analysis conversation, and a white woman sitting in the other corner with her husband, asked us about the stack of papers and the research. We gave her a very vague explanation about studying self-identification practices among Mexican-white couples in Texas and without hesitation she gave us an example of a friend of hers who was a "good white woman" married to a "bad Hispanic man" who did not deserve to be a parent because he was "urban" (coded language for a person of color), of a "lower" class status as the woman, who "obviously did drugs" and "didn't care for supporting his family." She kept narrating the story of white female victimhood at the mercy of this threatening Latino and the woman's only "obvious" choice to divorce this man. Mariela and I sat there acting unaffected, nodding and smiling to this woman's story, while also contemplating the enormity and crudeness of this microaggression towards Latin@s (that, as Latinas, obviously affected us). Not only were we forced into a conversation that required emotional labor on our behalf, but we also chose to tacitly wait until this woman stopped engaging with us (very reminiscent of the experiences of people of color working as flight attendants and enrolled in elite law schools and discussed by Evans (2013) and Moore and Evans (2013)) and we both felt

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like we should have responded differently to this woman. After the woman left, I remember both Mariela and I looked around to see if anyone else was near us, looked at one another, and shook our heads in disbelief.

Lastly, Latin@s also interjected themselves into the discussion of data findings and codes in both verbal and non-verbal ways. Verbally, Latin@s would often interrupt us and ask more about the research in a genuinely interested way because the data and our findings did not necessarily fit with their own personal experiences dealing with identity as Latin@s in Texas. One man in particular interrupted us, introduced himself as a senior undergraduate, computer science student who had grown up his entire life in the Rio Grande Valley who was baffled at some of the responses he was overhearing from both whites and Latin@s. He wanted to know more about what we thought about people of Mexican descent identifying as "Hispanic" and truly wanted to have an in-depth conversation about it because he could relate to some, but not all of the findings (shifting identities based on social context; the imposition of identities; etc.). We briefly engaged in conversation with him and it seemed almost therapeutic for him to engage in this discussion with us.

Kim Villa-Brown's Research Reflection

Kim is a 21-year-old woman born in Belmopan, Belize to a Mexican father and Belizean mother. Her father immigrated from San Luis Potosí, México to Cayo, Belize at the age of eleven and later met Kim's mother. When they were 19 both of her parents immigrated to the United States for the first time, returned to Belize, and again re-

migrated to the United States at different times. Kim was 5 months old at the time of her

migration to the United States; her sister was 10 years old; and, her youngest brother had

not been born yet. Kim's mother is a domestic worker and her father works in

construction. At the end of 2012, Kim applied for Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrivals (DACA) and in March 2013 it was approved by the United States Citizenship

and Immigration Services office (USCIS), allowing her to then apply for a two-year

work permit and a driver's license. In August of 2013, she traveled to New York (one of

the few states at the time to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples) to marry her

partner of four years, Lacy. She is currently working towards completing her Bachelor's

degree in Community Health, and hopes to graduate by Spring 2015. Both Kim and her

partner, Lacy, are former students of mine, having taken my Introduction to Gender and

Society course in the spring of 2011 at Texas A&M University. Kim's active

participation in my class, including her very critical insights and consistent engagement

with class materials both in discussions and in assignments, coupled with her personal

experiences as a dark-skinned, undocumented (and, later temporarily documented

through DACA) Latina in a same-sex relationship (and, later marriage) with a white

woman were the reasons why I offered Kim the position as one of my research assistants

for this project.

The following excerpts are directly taken from memos written by Kim

throughout the coding and data analysis process (May – November 2013):

> "In response to coding Nicole's interview, as the first of the study, it was not
> particularly triggering although it was a realization of how problematic it is when
> an individual isn't aware that they are racially problematic. Especially when
> there's a sense of great separation from acting out racism and being racist. The

fact that she wouldn't name racism for what it is, but instead calling it "prejudiced" I think is really representative of how most people feel about race relations in the 21st century and was really frustrating. Coding Dave's interview was more interesting because it's where I sensed that there really is a disconnect between how he understands his own racial identity and the race of others versus how Nicole does. This really just makes me wonder about whether or not there's disconnect in my own interracial relationship with my partner." (Kim, Memo, Couple 1)

"Reading through Kate's interview especially, all the language that portrays Rey to be this epitome of exotic Mexico was uncomfortable." (Kim, Memo, Couple 3)

"This interview was really difficult to code through. It was so triggering on a number of levels starting with the gender dynamic of Justin seeming so controlling and possessive of what Aida said. Aida and Justin both held on to really rigid beliefs of what the role of the woman is in a household, not to mention Justin made it seems as though the reason he likes Aida as a Hispanic woman is because she "is more traditional" and thus more likely to take his shit? This interview altogether was upsetting and it took me a few days to stop thinking about it." (Kim, Memo, Couple 4)

"After reading Corey's interview I was exhausted. I was shocked that so early on in the interview he (seemingly) freely repeated racial slurs he hears among his workplace as though it was totally normal and fine. It's unnerving to realize that interracial relationships are at times no more racially aware and understanding than a mono-racial couple with blatantly racist ideologies. And worse of all, to see Hispanic and Latinos people act accordingly with racist sentiments towards people of their own racial or ancestral groups." (Kim, Memo, Couple 5)

"Reading this interview caused a lot of emotions. Especially reading Domingo's take on Hispanics being lazy and depreciated Black Americans as being lazy. Marla's commentary on how Domingo is such an exception as a Hispanic person because he's not a criminal. I felt really stressed out reading it, and upset and kind of pessimistic about the future of Latino relations in the U.S." (Kim, Memo, Couple 7)

"This interview set was interesting because I feel like it is where I would like to think that most interracial couples are at in their understanding of race relations. Sandra being upset and triggered by what she perceives to be many racially charged incidents and not feeling like she can discuss them with Alan because he seems to dismiss and invalidate any and most of her concerns. After going through this interview, it was almost like I went into a hyper-vigilant mode of

how my partner took my commentary about feeling like I was being treated differently because of my race." (Kim, Memo, Couple 8)

"What continues to be difficult for me to digest is the way that these couples have adapted to prejudices and racism by incorporating and even justifying it as a valid critique against them. Watching racism manifest itself within an interracial couple has been upsetting." (Kim, Memo, Couple 10)

"I was triggered by Georgia's ignorance—or my perceived ignorance. Her arguments for "black people get more resources" really upset me, and Antonio's uppity attitude surrounding his family being so educated was unnerving. Again with the pitting Latinos against each other for the sake of differentiating who is better than the other." (Kim, Memo, Couple 13)

"The way that Brian was really defensive about protecting Adriana's brother-in-law's masculinity was disturbing and also the *altanera* (uppity)-type attitude that Adriana has about her family being such "good" Hispanics perpetuates this concern of mine that we are losing Latino's to the false hope that we should be more White because it's better." (Kim, Memo, Couple 21)

"Wesley was a great interview. This is the turning point for how negative and disheartened I was feeling about the existence of white allies and positive interracial relationships. It's interesting because Melissa was less aware of racial problems and it was humbling to read the thoughts of a white ally on wanting to improve the situation of race relations. This was a refreshing interview." (Kim, Memo, Couple 22)

"Super frustrating to hear Tony speak about Lupe in this exotic, trophy kind of way with calling her his "Mexican princess" and talking about how he's not a racist or white supremacist but he's proud to be white. It's the kind of this that perpetuates that Latinas are "better" at being domestic and subservient and this kind of mind frame really angers me. It takes away the autonomy and dignity of black and brown women. Super annoyed after coding this interview." (Kim, Memo, Couple 24)

"Powerful. This interview triggered a lot of emotions because of Erica's stories of being deported and coming back to the states to live a better life than in Mexico. Even more than that, I felt like the way that she described being treated by John and his family is as invisible. Almost less valued and like she's not really there…" (Kim, Memo, Couple 34)

"Reading about the experiences of Lorrie's where her family and friends attempted to have an intervention with her when they found out she was dating a Mexican man sort of left me awestruck, even though I know that this mentality

still exists and I experienced some of it with my partners family, it still makes my stomach turn and makes me really upset." (Kim, Memo, Couple 37)

"This interview was triggering in that the mocking of Latino's who can't speak Spanish by white people who only speak English is so disrespectful, in my opinion. The way that Arthur talks about how Victoria only speaks English and laughs when she attempts Spanish is so frustrating to me. Also, Victoria's claim that we should reclaim the word "spic" seems like a really desperate attempt at no longer having to deal with painful slurs, but it falls flat and I think is really misguided." (Kim, Memo, Couple 40)

"There was a time when the coding team was at the coffee shop and there was an older white woman wearing a "Proud to be an American" shirt on, or something along those lines, and she was staring us down as we were discussing the interview. It was really angering for me. It completely felt like a power/intimidation tactic because we switched to speaking Spanish instead thinking that would maybe deter her from inserting herself in a silent, dominating way. Once we did this, she just moved to be behind us and continued to stare and listen to our conversation until she left with her old white male partner after about 20 minutes. This whole situation was uncomfortable and even felt unsafe although this was clearly and elderly white woman who could cause no physical harm. Other times it was just annoying to watch people sit around us and as soon as they tuned in to what we were talking about, they'd give us a dirty look and get up and walk away. These things just contribute to making conversations about race feel uneasy and unwelcome." (Kim, Memo, Public Coding Memo)

Mariela Flores-Malagón's Research Reflection

Mariela is a 22-year-old woman who was born and raised in Austin, Texas. Both of her parents are originally from Guanajuato, México and immigrated to the United States without documentation/authorization during different times of their lives (father in 1983; mother in 1991). In 1996, both of her parents and brother obtained their legal permanent residency, and in 2012 her father became a naturalized United States citizen. Her father is a self-employed landscaper and her mother is a housewife. She has four siblings—three sisters and one brother—and they have had to face the struggles and hardships of a mixed status family for decades. Additionally, all four significant

romantic relationships that Mariela has been in have been with undocumented immigrant

men from México. Mariela, like Kim, is a former student of mine from my Introduction

to Gender and Society spring 2011 course at Texas A&M University and conversations

with her throughout the years as we have kept in contact have really shown that she has

developed a sociological imagination as she has actively engaged in really in-depth

analysis of race relations and Latin@s in the United States through the research process

of this project, in making connections between course materials (in Sociology and

History in particular), this research and her own experiences as a Latina, as well as a

recent graduate (Spring 2014) of Texas A&M University conferring a degree in

Sociology.

The following excerpts are directly taken from memos written by Mariela

throughout the coding and data analysis process (May – November 2013):

> "Once I was aware of how racism operates, it became easier to witness and it became easier to understand the reasons why it was never really talked about. Every few weeks, Jennifer, Kim, and I would meet at a local coffee shop to discuss the interviews and in various occasions, were witnesses of just how racism is not something people are receptive to. There was one particular incident in which Jennifer and I noted clearly. We had been discussing race and racism, and this young, white woman approached a vacant table next to us, placed her belongings on the table, yet once she heard the conversation we were having, picked her belongings up from the table, and stormed out of the coffee shop. She did not even sit down. This incident really opened my eyes to the fact that race and racism is something that isn't welcome for discussion, and it also helps understand why it has not ended. If people are not willing to hold critical conversations about topics such as racism, solutions to end it will never be reached." (Mariela, Memo, Public Coding Memo)

> "One of the interviews that really made me cringe was interview #4. This interview was a joint interview, and it was very hard to not have subjective thoughts while coding this particular interview. The white male was completely unaware of how ignorant he was. He claimed that whites were becoming the minority, failing to see that being labeled as a minority implies more than just

numbers. Being a minority also takes into account the lack of resources a particular group has to live with. White people are not a minority, they are the majority; they have easier access to all of the resources than any other racial group, and for him to claim that race is irrelevant was just ignorant. Racism is the foundation by which he talks down and stereotypes members of the Latino community. He is not aware of any form of racial oppression because he will never experience racism. He will only reap its benefits, failing to realize that it is because racism is structurally institutionalized, that he has them." (Mariela, Memo, Couple 4)

"Reading the interviews, one of the patterns that was very noticeable to me was that most white respondents grouped Hispanics/Latinos as all being undocumented, all while viewing their partner, and in some cases, their in-laws, as exceptions to the rule. Many respondents generalized that all Hispanics were undocumented just because they all looked the same. I found this generalization extremely problematic because documented and undocumented people have different lived experiences as well as different cultures, and to assume that they are the same is an injustice to them." (Mariela, Memo, General Interview Reflections)

"Interviewee, Jessica, Couple #11, said that she views Hispanic/Latino women as women who "are illegals and just crossing over to have children" and Hispanic men as "a swarm of illegals crossing the river and infiltrating America", which is the typical view of most white respondents. Hispanic men and women, for the most part, are viewed as a problem, and it is evident that the anti-immigration sentiment that pervades America is fueled by the stereotypes whites attribute to Hispanics." (Mariela, Memo, Couple 11)

"The interviews that triggered the most emotional labor for me were the ones of Paul and Miriam (Couple #16) and their daughter Liliana (Couple #20). The way Miriam became a mother to Liliana caused a great sadness in my heart. Liliana is the product of a rape, and as a victim of sexual violence, I can empathize with Miriam and Liliana. I had to step away from both of these interviews just because I could not fathom what I had just read." (Mariela, Memo, Couple 16 and 20)

"Setting aside these negative feelings, interviewee 22, Wesley, a white male, left me very impressed with just how knowledgeable he was about the realities of racism. He was extremely aware of the fact racism is structurally institutionalized and how it does not affect him simply because he has white skin. I loved the fact that the reason he classified his wife, Melissa, as racially white, was because "she doesn't experience the same things black or brown people experience". He understands that because Melissa is able to pass for white, she will never be discriminated against, therefore she cannot identify as Hispanic.

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This explained to me why Melissa distanced herself from her own people; she could never relate to those who experience racism because she never has to carry the "burden" of having colored skin." (Mariela, Memo, Couple 22)

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Some of the problems encountered during data collection include the following: First, recruitment proved to be slower than anticipated, which led to recruitment protocol and parts of the project to be modified, including the expansion to other locations. Second, 10 of the 50 couples refused to be interviewed separately, and, while their interviews gave a significant amount of information and insight into their relationships with their partners, these interviews were approached with caution regarding power dynamics and censoring, noting whether the individuals' body language spoke to the comfort or truthfulness of the response. Lastly, some participants refused to be audio-recorded which was not ideal for data collection for fear of losing or omitting information provided during the interview.

CHAPTER V

SELF-IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES AMONG LATIN@S OF MEXICAN

DESCENT IN ROMANTIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH WHITES IN TEXAS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the way in which Mexican ancestry Latin@s in romantic

relationships with whites racially and ethnically self-identify. Specifically, I focus on

how Mexicans experience race and racialization in and outside of intimate spaces, taking

into consideration the socio-geographical location of residence, class, gender, and sexual

orientation. I argue that racial and ethnic self-identification practices among Latin@s in

romantic relationships with whites follow the same patterns described by Sáenz and

Aguirre (1990) where these identities are fluid and dynamic, often varying by context

and social space and I take into consideration the influence socio-geographical space has

on self-identification practices among Latin@s of Mexican descent residing in Texas.

More specifically, how this particular space creates a multitude of racial and ethnic

identities for people of Mexican descent given the complex history of this area[26].

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[26] For example, Spanish colonization of Mexico; Spanish and *criollo* (individuals of Spanish descent born in the colonies) migration from the center of Mexico towards what is now Texas and much of the southwestern region of the United States; *mestizaje* between indigenous groups in this area and the Spanish; the creation and evolution of the *tejan@* identity (a term that has historically shifted, but today refers to Texans of Mexican descent and more specifically Texans of Mexican descent whose families resided in that area prior to Spanish and American settlement); and, the American migration, settlement and colonization of parts of Mexico that now makeup most, if not all, of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming,

Furthermore, I argue that "Hispanic" operates in a variety of ways: the meanings of "Hispanic" among Latin@s of Mexican descent varies by generation of migration, geographical location, and functions as an inclusionary and exclusionary tool among this population; identifying as "Hispanic" often occurs through a process of elimination; and, the use of "Mexican" and "Mexican American" are firmly adopted as identities that offer resistance to the panethnic/panracial labels commonly used.

In addition to contributing to research on racial and ethnic identity among Latin@s, this chapter fills the gaps in the literature on intergroup relations, families, and race, more specifically how racialized identities, such as those experienced by Latin@s of Mexican descent, are often co-constructed multi-level identities, existing individually and intimately, and intrinsically tied to formal and informal institutions, history, space and place.

FINDINGS

The following section examines the experiences of Mexicans who are married or in romantic relationships with whites and the effects of these relationships on racial and ethnic identities. I discuss overall findings about self-identification among Latin@s of Mexican descent who participated in this research, namely: (a) how identity is fluid and dynamic and often varies by social and geographical context; (b) the process of elimination through which "Hispanic" identity is chosen; (c) the meaning of "Hispanic",

areas that were, and continue to be, crucial to the expansion and maintenance of the American empire.

in particular how it is used as an inclusionary and exclusionary tool; and, (d) fighting against the use of panethnic labels, often used as racial labels, such as "Hispanic" as a form of resistance against the status quo and racial hierarchy in the U.S.

Each of these observations and conclusions, based on the experiences, feelings, emotions, and beliefs of the individuals in these couples, provide an understanding of how Mexicans experience their racial self, how white oppression operates in everyday experiences in overt and covert ways, and the effect of that oppression not only on individuals at the micro level, but on the larger, institutional, macro level as well. Specifically these findings show that at the core of racial and ethnic identity formation for Latin@s of Mexican descent are highly embedded micro and macro level racial projects that are, and continue to be, affected by formal and informal racial practices and hierarchies, as well as the adoption of colorblind racist attitudes, beliefs, and policies. Furthermore, these formal and informal processes not only have abstract repercussions based on changes in nomenclature, but include contribute to a continuous and oppressive process that constrain Latin@s through the denial of access to resources (e.g., access to institutions such as education; legal rights such as legal processes of citizenship) and ultimately affects their accumulation of racial and social capital. In doing so, the position of Latin@s in the racial hierarchy is ultimately always relinquished to the middle, "honorary white", and lower, "collective black" (Bonilla-Silva 2002) rungs of the racial hierarchy. Moreover, because of the imposition of racial identities, Latin@s are often forced to negotiate their reactions, including making choices as to resist being imposed upon, deflecting it, or acknowledging and ultimately agreeing with it. The

following sections describe the experiences of participants in this study, as well as the

broader findings and implications.

Self-Identification Practices of Mexicans in Romantic Relationships and Marriages with Whites in Texas

Rogelio Sáenz and Benigno Aguirre (1990) argue that Mexican "ethnic identity

of the self shifts with changes in reference groups (family and persons of non-Mexican

descent, or 'outsiders')" (p.24). Findings from this study support their argument, where

Mexicans adapt their identities depending on who they are surrounded by. For example,

Sandra, a 32-year-old Mexican woman from Reynosa, Tamaulipas, México, in a

romantic relationship with Alan, a 35-year-old white man from San Francisco,

California, said,

> **Sandra:** With family I'm Mexican, among all white people I'm Latina, with friends who identify as Hispanic, I'm Hispanic, with friends who identify as Mexican, I'm Mexican. *It just varies*.

Sandra's articulation of how her identity shifts by reference group exemplifies how fluid

and dynamic her identity is while simultaneously demonstrating that for Latin@s,

identity is often an adaptive and chameleon-like choice. Moreover, I would add that

reference group (social context) is not the only contextual situation in which identity

shifts.

The impact of geographical location on shifts in identity is largely understudied

and findings from this study show that geographical context is an important factor worth

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considering when discussing the fluidity of Latin@ identity. Namely, the experiences living outside of the United States, within different parts of the United States, and in different cities of Texas. Melissa, a 30-year-old light-skinned Mexican woman originally from El Paso, Texas, currently residing in Houston, who identifies racially as white and ethnically as Mexican, illustrates this with regard to her experiences dealing with the identity politics of different countries and the United States,

> **Melissa:** So, growing up, as I'm sure Domingo[27] told you, we lived all over the world, we lived in Texas, in the Philippines, in Mexico City, in Monterrey, and then back to Texas. And, I guess I just had to adapt to wherever we were and that's really how I learned about my identity. When I was little and we lived here in Texas we were Hispanic, when we lived in Manila, we were Americans, when we went to Mexico we were also Americans, but I know Doming and I experienced things differently both in Mexico City and Monterrey. He was treated differently in Mexico, he has dark skin, so I think people thought he was Mexican, he then rejected that identity and got out cast to the *gringo* category, which he resented because he knew he was Hispanic, but that wasn't an identity used in our school and he felt particularly isolated.

Even when not residing in the United States or directly engaging with the U.S. system of racial classification, it is deeply ingrained in the experiences of Latin@s. For example Melissa's description of Domingo's experience as a dark-skinned man living in Mexico speaks to her assumption that Mexico is a racial democracy (because of the racial rhetoric in Mexico that assumes that everyone is equal parts Spanish and indigenous ["*mestiz@*"]) where issues of class are the culprits of social divisions, inequality, and discrimination and issues of race are solely an American thing. While Melissa acquiesces to changing her identity based on her geographical location, her brother,

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[27] Domingo is Melissa's younger brother who was also interviewed in the San Antonio sample.

Domingo, rejects this change, causing further resistance and social isolation. This is one example of how identities are situationally-specific with regard to physical location (differing by country, within the same country, and within specific locations in that same country) and social and intimate interactions. The experience narrated by Melissa is one example of how contextual experiences both within and outside of the United States affect the fluidity of racial and ethnic identities among Latin@s of Mexican descent residing in the U.S.

Similarly, migrating from Mexico to the United States also has an effect on identity formation. Although Erica, a 35-year-old medium to dark skinned woman from Zacatecas, Mexico, currently residing in Bryan, Texas, did not shift her identity following her immigration from Mexico when she was sixteen, she acknowledges that race and ethnicity in the United States are often conflated and operate differently from what she experienced in Mexico. For her, adopting "Hispanic" as an identity is an American thing that she attributes to people born in the United States (including those of Mexican descent),

> **Erica:** I don't like "Hispanic"… It makes me think about people who have looked at me or treated me differently… He [ex-husband] said whites would make fun of us because we were brown and because I don't speak English. That's when I understood everything better I guess. I've heard Hispanic before. I don't know what Hispanic means. It's a totally *gringo* thing. When I came here [to the U.S.] everyone said to me, "Erica, *tu eres Hispana*" [translation: you are Hispanic]. I would say to them, "No, I'm not. You are. I'm not. I'm MEXICAN."

Unlike Melissa who has lived in several countries, Erica's experiences crossing the border and living in Texas for over half of her lifetime have not swayed her identity

towards adopting "Hispanic." Instead, like Domingo, Erica's negative experiences have strongly convinced her against adopting an identity commonly used in her current area of residence. Moreover, while Erica's identity appears to be static and firmly rooted in being and identifying as Mexican, her strong affiliation as Mexican is also a form of resistance against oppressive and imposed racialized identities such as Hispanic (see section below discussing this further).

When discussing identity as it varied by state, respondents who originated outside of Texas or had lived in other states also expressed shifting their identities based on what was commonly used in that particular region or noticing a change based on geography. A report from the Pew Research Center (Taylor et al. 2012) found that the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" have not been fully embraced by people of Latin American descent in the United States. Indeed, a 51% majority of participants in that study said they mostly identified by the family's country of origin and 24% expressed preference for a panethnic label (Taylor et al. 2012). Furthermore, while over half of Hispanic adults surveyed in 2012 expressed no preference for "Hispanic" or "Latino", a study, also from the Pew Research Center (López 2013b), found that "Hispanic" is preferred over "Latino" (López 2013b). However, results in that report also indicate that the state of Texas is an exception with 46% of respondents expressing a preference for "Hispanic" to describe themselves, 8% preferring "Latino," and 44% expressing no preference (López 2013b).

Results from this research found that of the 50 Latin@s of Mexican descent interviewed, 72% originated from Texas, 22% from various locations throughout

Mexico, and 6% from other U.S. states. Of the 72% of Mexicans of Latin@ descent from Texas, 50% racially identified as Hispanic, 22.2% as Mexican, 11.11% as Mexican American, 8.3% as white, 2.8% as none, and 2.8% as Latin@. These results support the findings from the Pew Research Center's (López 2013b) report in that Texans of Mexican descent overwhelmingly identify as "Hispanic." Furthermore, of the 22% who originated from Mexico, 54.4% racially identified as Mexican, 27.3% as Latin@, 9.1% as white, and 9.1% as Mexican American. Lastly, of the 6% originating from other U.S. states, 33.3% identified as Latin@, 33.3% as white, and 33.3% as Hispanic.

Table 2, shown on page 84, shows racial self-identification by location of interview. It is clear from this table that racial identification among Latin@s of Mexican descent in romantic relationships with whites and who reside in Texas varies by where these individuals live. The overall majority of respondents racially identified as "Hispanic" (38%) in particular those interviewed in San Antonio (40%) and Brazos County, while the majority of respondents from Austin (40%) and Houston (50%) identified as "Mexican."

Interestingly, among the fourteen Latin@s of Mexican descent interviewed for this project who were not originally from Texas, only one identified as "Hispanic," with the remaining thirteen identifying as "Mexican," "Latin@," or "Mexican American." Mateo, a 29-year-old man of Mexican descent from Miami, Florida, in a relationship with Erin, a 28-year-old white woman from Illinois, was the only respondent not from Texas to identify as "Hispanic" and explains it below:

> **Mateo:** I grew up in Miami, everybody assumed I was Cuban… I'm not, but I know a lot about Cuba and Cubans… I also know a lot of Brazilians in Miami

and here in Texas… I've talked with all of them about how they identify… sometimes I feel like I'm having an identity crisis…When I came to College Station I heard "Hispanic" a lot… *a lot*. Erin was using it, I had no idea what the fuck it meant, I probably don't use it correctly… I don't care… I get less questions when I tell people I'm Hispanic instead of, "Hi, I'm Mateo, I'm Mexican and I'm from Miami"… people question if there really are Mexicans in Miami. Less questions, except when people actually ask me what "Hispanic" means and then I look like an idiot.

Mateo's experience with how others perceived him, especially when introduced to a new term, like Hispanic, by his partner and others around him, was a catalyst for him to identify as what he perceives to be the least difficult explanation of his identity. Through this process, his identification as Hispanic does not necessarily reflect how he actually feels about his identity but rather what is the most convenient and least troublesome explanation of who he is. As the interview continued, I asked Mateo if he still identified as Mexican and in what contexts that was the case. He responded by saying the following:

> **Mateo:** I guess sometimes it depends on who's around… if I meet other Hispanics, they want to know more… they'll usually start speaking Spanish… I think they do it so they can see where you're from. I am Mexican whenever I meet other Hispanics.
> **Jennifer:** What about when you're around whites? Other racial groups?
> **Mateo:** I guess I'm Hispanic around everybody else.

Mateo's explanation of his identity illustrates both what Sáenz and Aguirre (1990) discuss with regard to how identities are context-specific and situationally-based around the reference group. Mateo who had previously not thought about himself as "Hispanic," adapted to the identity imposed on him by his partner, Erin, and others he encountered while in Texas. His adaptation, however, was not based on finding an

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identity that fit his experience the best, but rather, was based on accommodating the

preferences of all non-Latin@s he engages with.

Moreover, because context is also historically rooted social change also affects

how identities are selected. Elizabeth, a 72-year-old woman from Bryan, Texas, who

identifies as Hispanic and is married to Kevin, a 73-year-old white man from Iowa,

experienced racial integration in Bryan, Texas, during her time in school. As a result of

integration and hearing "Hispanic" for the first time, Elizabeth's identity shifts from

"Mexican" to "Hispanic,"

> **Jennifer:** Why do you identify as "Hispanic"?
> **Elizabeth:** I used to identify as Mexican when we lived in the *barrio*
> [neighborhood] and went to a Mexican school. But when we integrated with the
> *bolillos* [whites], I loved it, I loved knowing new people and just started
> identifying as Hispanic…
> **Jennifer:** Was there anything in particular about "Hispanic" that drew your
> attention and consequently caused you to change how you identified?
> **Elizabeth:** It was something new, using it, you know, being called something
> new that no one really knows what it means, it was, it was a rebirth. For once we
> finally started being recognized in the community, we were good enough to go to
> school with the *bolillos*, we finally had access to what everyone else had and we
> could share our own culture, food, language, celebrations and experience with
> others. It just felt really good to do that, to not feel like such an outsider or
> outcast, to feel like we had finally arrived and were recognized by the
> community. It was a moment of pride for me. I don't know how others felt
> about it, but for me, I felt happy and proud and I think back on it and I feel so
> blessed to have been there for that.

Elizabeth was the only participant who had an experience like this where local

desegregation practices integrated Hispanics with white students prior to the federal

decision that, "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" found in *Brown v.*

Board of Education (1954) in reference to black-white segregation. To Elizabeth, the

process of integration introduced her not only to the new identity of "Hispanic" but also

to a group of people she had little to no contact with, a process which although not visibly forceful, coerced her into adopting "Hispanic" as an identity because of the distancing away from other conceptualizations of Mexicanness that it generated. Like Elizabeth said, "it was a rebirth," in this case, a racial rebirth that still managed to reinforce the racial hierarchy by not only distancing "Hispanics" from "bad Mexicans" (or other people of Latin American descent) while also retaining social distance from whites at the top of the racial hierarchy, very similar to Bonilla-Silva's Latin Americanization Theory (2002).

Furthermore, this is one of the ways in which the imposition of racial identity operates as an oppressive microaggression that negates the experiences of Latin@s in multiple racialized spaces. In other words, because Mateo felt an indirect pressure to identify as "Hispanic" among non-Latin@s[28], he experienced an erasure and negation of his experiences as a Mexican man, who otherwise would have identified as "Mexican", that functioned as a means of lumping him into a pan-racial/pan-ethnic category (part of the micro level racial project) with others with a few shared physical and cultural characteristics while simultaneously distancing him, and others like him, from the whites at the top and the collective black at the bottom. Additionally, my observation that socio-geographical location influences identity formation is also exemplified by Mateo, who prior to moving to Texas, had never been directly confronted with terminology he did not understand and which did not necessarily apply to his life. In his new location,

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[28] See Chapter 7 for a discussion of imposed identities, namely, what I call, "Imposed Hispanicity" in these romantic couples.

his adaptive strategy of adopting "Hispanic" served the purpose of staving off any future conversations, microaggressions, and emotional labor required in explaining and justifying his identity choices.

Sáenz and Aguirre's (1990) also argue that, "the self-image that is appropriate with intimates is not the self-image that is selected for use with outgroup members" (p.24). Findings from this research on Mexican-white couples, however, do not support this argument. Instead, responses show that Latin@s of Mexican descent in romantic relationships and marriages with whites often attempt to identify as they would with an ingroup members. Often, Mexican respondents discussed how their identities were contingent on what was most comfortable and least threatening for their white partner. For example, Jorge, a 44-year-old man from and currently residing in Bryan, Texas, who identifies as Hispanic and is married to Ann, a 42-year-old woman from New Orleans, Louisiana, said the following:

> **Jorge:** I don't know. I feel like I've identified differently at different stages of my life. When I was a kid, I visited my grandma a lot and she'd say to me, "*Mijo, tu eres Mexicano, pero también eres Americano. Acuérdate de eso siempre*" [translation: "Son, you are Mexican but you are also American. Always remember that]… For some reason that just stayed with me… I used to say, "Soy bien Mexicano" [translation: I'm really, really Mexican"] but the more I talked to friends and co-workers, the more I'd feel confused. I heard so many words used to describe me, some were okay, I guess, like "Hispanic", "Latino", "Mexican", "Mexican American". And others were hurtful, like "spic", "beaner" and "wetback"… When Ann and I started dating she would refer to me as Hispanic, I think she just thought it was the most appropriate and inoffensive name. So, I let her keep calling me that and now I identify that way. I guess it's the least confusing for people. I don't know.

Not only does Jorge's narrative speak to the shift in his identity and accommodating for his wife's level of comfort with racial terminology, but it reveals the confusion often felt

and experienced by Latin@s in the United States with regard to the different labels available. Several other respondents who identified as "Hispanic" narrated similar stories about their issues with self-identification, most of whom acknowledged that their chosen identity was "Hispanic" because it was the simplest and most unquestioned label to use. The following sections will develop these observation further, examining how respondents came to identify as "Hispanic" and under which conditions (process of elimination and accommodating the preferences of white partners so as to not come off as threatening).

Identifying as Hispanic Through a Process of Elimination

It was clear when I was conducting interviews with participants that there were overall feelings of confusion when talking about the meanings of race and ethnicity, in particular when talking about identifying as "Hispanic." Often, when asked how they would racially identify, participants asked me to clarify what I meant. To not influence their responses, I would restate my question verbatim, which only frustrated participants further. Then, I would rephrase the question as: When asked how you racially identify on surveys, school and official government forms, or other similar documents, how do you racially identify? The reason for asking about these sorts of formal and informal documents was to give participants a guiding point as to what I was referring to, however, I followed up the question with: If you had a choice, regardless of the options available on these forms, what would *you* choose? In other words, if given freedom to write in an option for these sorts of questions, what would you write? This follow up

question was added because I acknowledge that the association with formal documentation of race and ethnicity (such as demographic data gathering from schools, local and state governments, and the federal government) has been problematic in considering the racial and ethnic identities of people of Latin American descent. For example, the ways in which the U.S. Census Bureau has collected data on the race and ethnicity of people of Latin American descent has changed over the years – assuming that people were either only black, white, or all other races; including "Mexican" in the 1930 census as a racial category[29]; since the 1980 census asking if the respondent is of Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent; and, in 2010, providing a write-in option under the race question. Additionally, in 2010, the Census also implemented a Race and Hispanic Origin Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE). Nearly 500,000 households received the experimental questionnaire, which worded race and ethnicity questions differently than on the official form. Findings from a recent Census (Ríos, Romero and Ramírez 2014) report found that many people, especially Latin@s and immigrants, do not identify with the American concept of race. In particular, whereas the U.S. government categorizes "Hispanic" as an ethnicity, those identifying as Hispanic or Latin American descent think of it as a race. As a result, 22 million people, 97% of whom were of Latin American descent, chose the write in of "some other race" as their racial category (Ríos, Romero and Ramírez 2014). Furthermore, of the 47.4 million

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[29] This was the first and only time that "Mexican" was listed as a race in U.S. Census data collection on racial classification and enumerators were instructed to "record all persons who had been born in Mexico or whose parents had been born in Mexico and who did not fall into another racial category as "Mexican" (U.S. Census Bureau 2014).

people who self-identified as Hispanic, one-third chose "some other race" when asked

about their racial identity. Figure 7 below shows the results of the write-in (López and

Krogstad 2014).

Figure 7

Write-Ins for "Some Other Race" Among Hispanics in the 2010 Census

Percent of self-reported Hispanics who filled in the "some other race" box with ...

Mexican	44.3%
Hispanic	22.7
Latin American	10.0
Puerto Rican	3.7
Two or more SOR responses	3.6
Other	15.6
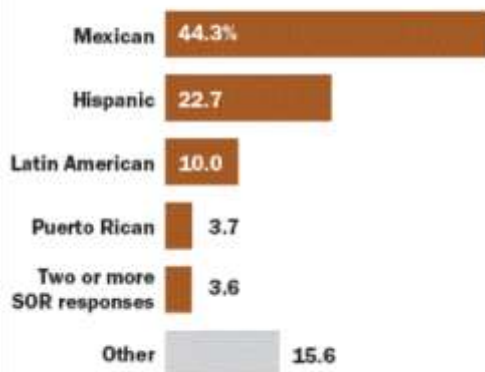
Note: Each category consists of multiple, equivalent write-in responses. For example, responses such as "Mexican American" and "Mexico" were coded as "Mexican" by the Census Bureau; "Hispana" and "Hispano" were coded as "Hispanic"; "Latino" and "Latin" were coded as "Latin American"; "Puertorriqueño" and "Boricua" were coded as "Puerto Rican"; and "Hispanic and Latino" were combined into "Multiple some other race".

Source: "Race Reporting among Hispanics: 2010" from the U.S. Census Bureau, Table 6. http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0102/twps0102.pdf

Source: Pew Research Center: http://www.pewresearch.org/files/2014/04/FT_Hispanics_Write_In_Codes.png

The findings of both the recent U.S. Census report (Ríos, Romero and Ramírez

2014) and the Pew Research Center (López and Krogstad 2014) are significant in that

for the first time since the Census has been collecting data on race and ethnicity people

of Latin American descent can express how they see themselves without being forced and coerced into an imposed identity such as "Hispanic" without consideration for the different conceptualizations of race.

Responses from participants in this research project show that people of Latin American descent often chose "Hispanic" as their racial identity through a process of elimination based on the racial categories commonly used by these formal governmental agencies. When asked how they racially identified without an explanation of what race was or what it was that I meant, 38% of respondents of Latin American descent opted for "Hispanic." Many respondents, like Abraham, a 20-year-old man from and interviewed in Houston in a relationship with Lauren, a 19 year-old-white woman from Petersburg, Virginia, expressed choosing "Hispanic" based on a process of elimination where they considered their fit into other categories,

> **Abraham:** Well, I'm not black and I'm not white, I'm definitely not Asian, so I guess I'm Hispanic.

After asking how people racially and ethnically identified, I also asked participants to define "race" and "ethnicity." Some participants conflated both terms based on differences in skin color, others defined them identically based on a common ancestral group or national origin, and others either did not have a definition or were unsure about how to define either label. For those individuals who defined race as biologically based on skin color, I asked them why they defined it that way; one participant, Eduardo, a 22-year-old man from Bryan, Texas, in a relationship with a white woman also from Bryan, Texas, said the following:

> **Jennifer**: So, how do you identify racially?

>**Eduardo:** I'm Hispanic. I used to identify as Mexican, sometimes as Mexican American, but then friends and my girlfriends used to refer to me as Hispanic. It doesn't make a difference to me. If it makes it easier, then that's what I am.
>**Jennifer:** Why?
>**Eduardo:** Well – because I'm not black and I'm not white, I'm Mexican or Hispanic or whatever.
>**Jennifer:** How do you define race?
>**Eduardo:** Race—well, I mean—to me, it's that there are different colors of skin. We call black people "black" because they have black skin. We call white people "white" because they have white skin.
>**Jennifer:** So, then how would you define ethnicity?
>**Eduardo:** It's the same thing as race to me.

For some people of Latin American descent, like Eduardo, there's a tacit acceptance of the label "Hispanic". I attribute this to the decades long effects and influence of the imposition of identities through limited categories in these formal avenues. In addition to this acceptance, there's also an indifference and unspoken frustration toward racial classification in the United States. When asked more specifically why he chose "Hispanic" as his identity, Victor, directly linked his identity as "Hispanic" to that found on governmental forms,

>**Jennifer:** Why do you identify as "Hispanic"?
>**Victor:** That's just what I've always known. I fill out forms, you know, for work, for jobs, all of those. And, well, I just check the box. I don't know, it's not that complicated. It's… it's a matter of what's there. You know, it seems like every day you have to fill one of those forms out… For me, for the ex-wife, for the girlfriend, for the kids. It never ends.

However, it is clear from his response, that his choice of classification was not ever really a choice, but rather a process of elimination that he has had to navigate his entire life. His frustration in the process of identifying is based not only on the mundane action of repeatedly filling out forms, but in the obvious lack of fit. The action of checking off boxes becomes routine and insignificant, and most importantly, uncomplicated and

meaningless. Similarly, Fernando, a 26-year-old man from Corpus Christi, Texas but resides in Bryan, Texas, who racially and ethnically identifies as "Mexican" and is in a romantic relationship with Kerry, a 24-year-old white woman from Denver, Colorado, expresses his confusion and subsequent frustration with racial categories,

> **Jennifer:** How would you say you identify yourself racially?
> **Fernando:** I am Mexican first and Hispanic second. I don't understand the racial categorization. I will always be Mexican first. I don't like the words "Hispanic" or "Latino"
> **Jennifer:** How would you define "race" and "ethnicity"?
> **Fernando:** Race just confuses me. I don't know what people mean by it. I mean—if I'm supposed to have a race, my choices are black or white? I mean, all I know is that I'm Mexican. I don't fit into a box. It frustrates me.

The racial identity formation process for people like Victor and Fernando, whose identities are based on macro-level racial projects such as the creation, imposition and dissemination of racial categories through formal avenues like Census data collection are part of a larger structural issue in which the experiences of people of Latin American descent, similarly to the experiences of black people and other people of color, have historically been considered unimportant, irrelevant, or invalid. Recently, these changes in measuring racial identity have occurred because of backlash from Latin@s in academia, policy, and activism, the push for better racial categories that can better measure multi-racial identity, and the changing demographic landscape where the Latin@ population in the United States continues to grow.

Thus, choosing how to identify by context is not a conscious choice, despite it being talked about in this way, it appears to be and participants spoke of "Hispanic" as an identity that they felt in control of. However, by adopting "Hispanic," individuals are abiding to social norms and conventions with regard to racial and ethnic identities and

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these are externally validated. That is, choosing how to identify is a conscious choice in terms of what one plays up (behavior, attire, hair, culture, etc.) but requires the perceptions of whites and others as validation. Therefore, there is a constant negotiation on behalf of Latin@s of Mexican descent on how to not be perceived as "bad Hispanics". This became another major point of interest for me as I formulated thoughts on this project and proceeded with the research. I sought to move beyond the influence of macro level racial projects like those I have discussed in this section, to examine not only the process of how they came to identify racially, but the meaning of the chosen identity, with a specific focus on "Hispanic" and "Mexican" given how these were predominantly adopted throughout all four locations. The next section will examine this further in relation to the coercive adoption of "Hispanic" based on the social distance it creates from "bad" people of Latin American descent and making others, namely whites, feel more comfortable and less threatened.

The Meaning of "Hispanic"

Identifying as "Hispanic" functioned in two ways among respondents, often at simultaneously: (1) as semi-inclusionary – associating positively with "Hispanic" as a means of establishing a comparable good moral character deemed worthy of interaction with "others of good moral character" (read: white) while also implying non-white and eliminating any sense of threat; and, (2) as exclusionary – associating certain "Hispanics" as people with morally reprehensible character traits who do pose threats to whites and other "Hispanics" distancing themselves from this behavior. In this way,

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"Hispanic" serves to be a socially amorphous identity, one that is often shapeless or can take on different forms, where in certain situations and contexts it is beneficial and in others it is not. People identifying as "Hispanic" then negotiate this ambivalence both in their ingroup and outgroup interactions.

The adoption of "Hispanic" often operated as a social distancing tool which participants would use to imply that they were "good Hispanics" who did not cause trouble or who were not associated with what they conceived as "bad Hispanics" (which use racial rhetoric and stereotypes to sanction people of color) like gangbangers, *cholos*, undocumented immigrants, Hispanics who are perceived as causing financial drains on American society by having large families, and sexually promiscuous women among others (who were often referred to by place of national origin like "Mexican"). This section will examine how adopting "Hispanic" serves as an ambiguous social distancing tool from other identities, including "Mexican," that generally carry negative associations according to respondents while simultaneously reinscribing the racial hierarchy that puts whites at the top and minorities in lower spaces. Even when adopting "Hispanic" as the label to identify with, participants also used it to distance themselves from the "other Hispanics."

Melissa, a 30-year-old woman identifying as "white" whom I have previously quoted, made her distinction between "good Hispanic" and "bad Hispanic" clear,

> **Melissa:** There are two types of Hispanic. If you are a woman, you're either classy or you're trashy. And, if you are a man, you're respectable or a thug or gangbanger. There's no in between.
> **Jennifer:** So, do you think that there's any way to differentiate "good Hispanics" from "bad Hispanics"?

> **Melissa:** I mean, well, you can tell. You can just tell. Wesley [husband] always tells me that I need to stop being so divisive, but I can't... when people are out there having fourteen children, crossing the border illegally, draining the American economy and expecting handouts, that's a problem.
> **Jennifer:** Why is that a problem?
> **Melissa:** Because then I get associated with that. Every day I have to make sure that people aren't associating me with people like that. Every day I have to battle the perceptions others might have of me, I think to myself every day "Will others think I'm "one of *those* Hispanics" because I'm Mexican?"
> **Jennifer:** When you say "others" to whom are you referring?
> **Melissa:** Everyone... um... you know, I don't want my professors [Melissa is in law school studying immigration law], the law office where I intern, or anyone to really think that I'm one of *those* Hispanics who takes advantage of the system.
> **Jennifer:** What is the racial makeup of your professors, bosses, friends in law school, or other lawyers you know or are networked with?
> **Melissa:** Well, they're mostly white. I do go to the Hispanic Gala every year though, so it's not just whites who I'm worried about.

Asking Melissa about the racial makeup of those she was concerned with getting a wrong impression of her caused a clear feeling of discomfort. Her concerns with being associated with "bad Hispanics" roots from racialized notions of what it means to be "Hispanic" or of Latin American descent in the United States – her descriptions are located in the racist foundation of the United States that aims to place people of color in racial positions that are "inferior" to those of whites while having material repercussions that benefit whites and place all others at a disadvantage (Feagin 2000, 2006, 2009, 2013). To be associated with those "bad Hispanics" would have negative material repercussions for Melissa, including limiting her access to education, employment, and other forms of racial and social capital. While cognizant of how limiting racist practices are, Melissa does not question her views on racial impression management or the effect that this has on others of Latin American descent who unlike her, cannot pass for or

necessarily identify as white without physical clues that still associate them as "bad Hispanics" regardless of whether they think of themselves as "bad" or not.

Additionally, other participants who cannot pass as white noted that they also felt the need to distance themselves from "bad Hispanics" by verbalizing their disapproval and belief in the stereotypes used for "Hispanics." For example, Aida, a 41-year-old woman who identifies as "Hispanic", from San Antonio, Texas, married to a 51-year-old white man from Albuquerque, New Mexico, expresses her ideas of what "Hispanic" means to her,

> **Aida:** I think Hispanic women are women who look like me but who are rough, like they have lived on the street, been abused, wear skimpy clothes and entice men with their bodies. They are always pregnant and looking for a handout… that's not me… they just look like me. I'm not one of those Hispanics.

Aida does not use the clear distinction between "good Hispanics" and "bad Hispanics" in the same way that Melissa does, but she does imply that there are two types of Hispanic women and that she is clearly one of the "few good Hispanic" women out there. Her interview was particularly problematic given that her husband, Justin, insisted that they be interviewed together. It was clear from body language, gestures, looks and comments that Justin had a very controlling demeanor towards Aida, who was very soft spoken and demure. Justin dictated what was said and how it was said, especially when the topics of race were introduced and Justin repeatedly insisted on shutting down those conversations between Aida and I, which served the purpose of invalidating and negating her responses while giving him a platform to control where the conversation was headed to. These were clearly raced and gendered behaviors, the idea that "good Hispanic women" are submissive, respectful, family-oriented, and devoted to others, and that Aida, at least in

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this particular joint interaction, fulfilled those notions and in Justin's view was an ideal

"Hispanic" woman (Williams 1990; González-López and Vidal-Ortiz 2008).

Interestingly, discussions of "bad Hispanics" and "good Hispanics" evoked raced

and gendered comments from the Latin American descent and white respondents.

Among the Latin American descent respondents, Alicia, a 26-year-old woman from San

Antonio, Texas, who identified as "Hispanic" and is now married (at the time of

interview she was engaged) to Robert, a 30 year-old white man also from San Antonio,

Texas, had very negative notions of what "Hispanic" women were like while holding

positive ones for "Hispanic" men,

> **Jennifer:** When I say "Hispanic women", "Latinas" or "Mexican women", what are your first thoughts?
> **Alicia:** I think of the type of woman I see downtown where I work the large, skimpy-clothed, with sharpie eyeliner…
> **Jennifer:** *Cholas*?
> **Alicia:** Yes, *cholas*. It's so unfortunate, but that's the first thing that came to my mind.
> **Jennifer:** What about "Hispanic" men, "Latinos," or "Mexican men"?
> **Alicia:** I envision the typical rich Hispanic, or actually the rich, [Mexican] national who is wearing the Armani, the Gucci, almost *guapo*-esque, but Mexican. I see the nice shoes, the tucked in dress-shirt, smelling like Armani, Aqua di Gio.

Alicia's responses clearly show that her initial thought on "Hispanic" women is that of

the trashy, low brow Latina who is a hypersexualized hot pot, and who does not adhere

to white standards of beauty. She immediately inferiorizes "Hispanic" women to look

differently, who are overly sexual, and implies that they are of lower class status. On the

other hand, her description of "Hispanic" men, while still problematic and rooted in

"Latin lover" stereotypes, elevates "Hispanic" men to higher socioeconomic status,

better physical appeal, and de-sexualization. In Alicia's conceptualization of "Hispanic" men, there are no moral characteristics associated with them as they are with "Hispanic" women, who are depicted as immoral or of questionable moral character based on their appearances or assumptions about their sexuality. In contrast to her descriptions of white men and women, who she describes very vaguely (white women as tall, skinny, blond and white men as tall, skinny and nerdy), there is a clear battle of fit for Alicia who is neither the hypersexual Hispanic woman nor the tall, skinny, blond, white woman. Furthermore, her and her husband, Robert, joke around with one another about being Mexican,

> **Alicia:** Yeah, it would be good to have something more that I fit into [re: racial identity]. Because I mean even Robert… you know, we joke at each other, and we're not exactly PC. He will say, "Ah, you're Mexican, *chíngate* [Translation: go fuck yourself]! You're Mexican, you're from Mexico." And, I reply with, "But I'm Spanish, I'm of Spanish descent." And, I'm like, "I'm lighter-skinned" and my mom is lighter than you and I can hear my grandmother in the background, "You're white, you're white."

Alicia, who did identify as Hispanic, spoke about those experiences with her grandmother, in particular the family immigration story, where according to her grandmother, their family was once a part of the Spanish nobility that immigrated to Mexico during Spanish colonization and in later generations was forced to immigrate to what is now San Antonio to evade the class tension generated by the Mexican Revolution. According to this narrative Alicia's family lost their wealth and assets at the hands of revolutionaries during the Mexican Revolution and were forced to immigrate to the north to pursue other ventures and distance themselves from social turmoil. This narrative is a common one among some Mexicans who seek to distance themselves from

any indigenous lineage in similar ways that some use racial categories in the U.S. to disassociate from "bad Hispanics" and "bad Mexicans". Thus, for Alicia, she is caught between two similar racial ideologies rooted in the dual weight of white supremacy experienced by people of Latin American descent residing in the United States. Alicia, like others, must then face the ideologies of racial purity rooted in Spanish colonization (exterminating the indigenous population through racial mixing until there is no more indigenous lineage to be found) and American colonization (physical and violent eradication of people of color and the subsequent denial of access to resources, materials goods, or social and racial capital). In this way, people like Alicia, adopt distancing tactics in hopes that they will be permitted access to racial spaces that allocate these material benefits based on "good" behavior, generally associated with "whiteness", as a woman of Mexican descent.

An interesting and important observation made from this research is that these conceptualizations of "Hispanic" varied by location. Just like the racial identity was different by location (majority in Brazos County and San Antonio identifying as "Hispanic" and the majority in Austin and Houston identifying as "Mexican"), the conceptualizations also varied by place of origin and place of residence. In San Antonio and Brazos County, participants were more likely to have negative views of "Hispanics" while those in Austin and Houston, especially those from Mexico or outside of Texas, voiced positive and more traditional opinions about "Hispanics," especially women. Pedro, a 27-year-old man from Mexico City, Mexico, who resides identifies as "Mexican", resides in Austin, Texas and who is in a relationship with Jessica, a 27-year

old white woman from Austin, Texas, associates Hispanic women with his family and with sentimental memories,

> **Pedro:** I think of my *abuelita* [grandmother] going to the *mercado* [market] every week to get fruit and vegetables in Cuernavaca. I think of her visits and all the times we went out walking around the park near my house, when we would go visit her and go out to each and she would let my parents have a date night while she and I spent the day out with her friends either at the stores window shopping or walking around town. She passed away a few years ago and now you can't really walk around Cuernavaca like that because of drug cartel violence. A lot has changed, it's a time that I cherish and that I know I will never experience again.

Similarly, Santiago, a 44-year-old man from Houston, Texas, who identifies as Mexican, and who is engaged to Hannah, a 41-year-old white woman from Arvada, Colorado, described Hispanic women in the following way:

> **Santiago:** I think Hispanic women are great, they are who I model my interest in women after. They are loving, caring, sacrificial, devoted, family-oriented and hard-working, while also being very independent, intelligent, and passionate about their lives, family, culture, and surroundings.

Participants from Austin and Houston also had more ties to recently immigrated populations or were more likely to be immigrants than those from Brazos County and San Antonio. Individuals with more personal and recent connections to immigrants were more likely to describe all "Hispanics" in positive ways because the experience hits closer to home for them. Those from San Antonio and Brazos County, the majority of whom were either part of families who had resided in Texas since before its annexation in the 1800s or whose family had immigrated to the U.S. several generations back.

I argue, then, that identity negotiation is an everyday process for Latin@s of Mexican descent in the United States, despite generation of immigration, where there is an ongoing process where racism must be balanced and negotiated. Latin@s whose

families have lived in the United States for multiple generations (or became part of the U.S. in the 1800s), they have been balancing and negotiating racism for longer than those with more recent immigration experiences. Thus, those Latin@s of Mexican descent who give more specific descriptions about "good Hispanics" and "bad Hispanics" use this as a way of negotiating access as an "honorary white" in order to access white resources.

Promoting positive ideas about "Hispanics" became an important tactic for combating stereotypes and preconceived notions about people of Latin American descent. While functioning in this way attempts to deflect racist discourses surrounding people of Latin American descent and provides agency, these tactics also function in ways that perpetuate ideas that "bad Hispanics" are still in the majority. Whether completely aware of the racist discourse or not, those participants who created "good" and "bad" Hispanic distinctions deal with internalized racist narratives mostly by not problematizing the constructions of "bad Hispanics". This is common among Latin@s who "encounter the discursive logics of the U.S. racial hierarchies… often deploy[ing] *overt stereotype deflection* to rectify, change and distance their self from problematic discourse" (Delgado 2013:167). After generations, these social distancing mechanisms that partially allow access become part of the intergenerational transmission of racial literacy (Twine 2011) used to navigate racial spaces and gain better opportunities and social capital for their families.

Resisting "Hispanic"

Resistance to "Hispanic" and "Latin@" was most commonly found in Austin and Houston, locations where respondents were more likely to identify as "Mexican" and whose immigration, or that of their family, is more recent relative to those found in Brazos County and San Antonio. Narratives like those of Erica and Fernando who have expressed not identifying as Hispanic based on their confusion regarding race in the United States also indicate how resistance operates as a tool against the imposition of racial categories. While some participants voiced their concerns over lack of fit with regard to racial categories, they continued to adopt "Hispanic" or "Latin@" because of the process of elimination already discussed. However, those, like Erica and Fernando, who openly challenged the use of panethnic/panracial terms such as "Hispanic" and "Latin@" pushed back on these categories in such a way that they carved their own space in the racial hierarchy, thus challenging the current racial classification system and its status quo. A space, that Oboler (1995), Alcoff (2000), and the recent findings from U.S. Census Bureau research (Rios, Romero and Ramirez 2014) and Pew Research Center (López 2013a, 2013b; Lopez and Krogstad 2014) show in their work is better served by the adoption of categories based on national origin or what Goldberg (1993) calls ethnorace.

Moreover, the percentage of participants engaged in this active act of resistance, i.e., those rejecting current categories and adhering to own conceptions of race as "Mexican", is of 28% (Table 2) compared to 38% of whom identified as "Hispanic". While an overall majority did not identify as "Mexican", this varied by location –

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participants from both Austin (40%) and Houston (50%), again, were more likely to identify outside of panethnic/panracial terms. However, within San Antonio and Brazos County, there were also participants who resisted these categories and opted for identifying as "Mexican" (10% and 20% respectively). The fact that "Hispanic" and "Latin@" were not the sweeping majority of the identities (collectively amounting to 48%) used also shows that there is no uniformity (unlike the data for ethnicity which with an 86% majority clearly demonstrates that there is agreement about ethnic identity as "Mexican") within self-identification among Mexicans of Latin American descent and that there are larger issues with the current racial classification system for this particular population. Furthermore, asking Mexicans of Latin American descent how they racially identified showed not only that people are not identifying as "Hispanic" or "Latin@" but that there were multiple ways for this population to identify, including "Mexican", "Mexican American", "white", "none", and as a combination of "Hispanic" and "Mexican American" (see Table 2 for the racial self-identification breakdown by city). In it of itself, the use of this many racial categories to describe one population coupled with data showing that there is not a sweeping majority points to heterogeneity within this population, as well as the willingness to resist being lumped into panethnic/panracial categories such as "Hispanic" and "Latin@" (also demonstrated with the quantitative data found by the U.S. Census Bureau and Pew Research Center mentioned in previous sections).

Similarly to Suzanne Oboler's (1995) findings on the perceptions of "Hispanic" as negative among women of Latin American descent in New York, the participants of

this study who did not identify as "Hispanic," voiced resistance to this identity based on

negative conceptions of what it meant to be "Hispanic." Lupe, a 29-year-old Mexican

woman from Victoria, Texas, residing in Houston and in a relationship with Tony, a 36-

year-old white man from Galveston, Texas, described her resistance to "Hispanic,"

> **Lupe:** Every time someone refers to me as "Hispanic" I cringe. It bothers me.
> I'm a schoolteacher, and that's what I'm usually called and what the students are
> called. The majority of the students we teach are of Mexican descent, they're not
> "Hispanic," they're not "Latinos," they are Mexican, they firmly identify as
> "Mexican" but then they have to fill out testing forms or their parents have to fill
> the forms, and no one knows what anybody means by "Hispanic" or "Latino"
> and it infuriates me. How can you ask someone to identify themselves but then
> give them choices that do not make any sense to anyone? What's wrong with
> identifying as Mexican? That's what we are, we aren't trying to pretend to be
> something or someone else. *Somos mexicanos* [We are Mexicans]. My students
> already face enough problems with schools that are run by people who do not
> understand them culturally, do we really need to confuse them a little bit more?
> **Jennifer:** And, you don't like to be identified as "Hispanic" either for those
> reasons? Because it doesn't describe you culturally?
> **Lupe:** It doesn't describe anybody I know who is Mexican. We teach at a
> predominantly Mexican school here in Houston, there's a few black students and
> a few white students, but for most, they come from Mexican families. How are
> you going to go up to these kids and tell them, "No, forget you are Mexican. You
> are Hispanic and make sure you check that box because we say so." There's not
> even an explanation for it.

Lupe's experience as a Mexican woman teaching a predominantly Mexican population

in Mexico not only speaks to how incongruous "Hispanic" is to a population that is

firmly rooted in its Mexican descent, but also touches on a larger issue of cultural

erasure where people of Mexican descent again must be distanced from what it means to

be Mexican and placed into a category that whitewashes them or makes them more

acceptable to those who are not of Mexican and Latin American descent, namely whites.

Additionally, it shows a lack of understanding from those who are not of Latin American

descent, about how a label like "Hispanic" does not describe or represent this population

and the psychological and emotional effects this has on a population who already faces

constraints with regard to education, housing, legal status, criminalization and

incarceration, employment, etc.

Participants like Lupe, who spoke to this lack of fit, erasure and whitewashing

used their self-identification as "Mexican" as an act of resistance against this form of

oppression. Those who chose to adopt the resistance strategy of "Mexican" also

understand the implications of this resistance, namely an exclusion from resources

affiliated with identifying as "Hispanic." Admitting to the use of "Hispanic" as an

identity provides Mexicans of Latin American descent the ability to not deal with

confrontations, giving explanations about their racial background, or come off as

threatening (see previous section discussing this). Resisting "Hispanic" on the other

hand has negative repercussions that are understood by those, like Lupe, who firmly

identify as "Mexican." Diego, a 35-year-old Mexican man from and residing in

Houston, Texas, in a relationship with Bethany, a 30-year-old white woman from

Wasilla, Alaska, understood the different ways in which "Hispanic" and "Mexican"

functioned in social, educational and work situations. He said the following:

> **Diego**: You know, it's fucked up, this happens to me all the time with new
> people I meet, with my son's school, with my job. If I talk about how I'm
> Mexican they treat me differently. Last week, I went to pick up my son from
> kindergarten, his teacher, this older white woman said to me, "I've been wanting
> to ask you this for a while, but are you Native American?" And, I said to her,
> very politely, "No, ma'am, everybody thinks so because of my long, black hair
> and my skin color, but I'm actually Mexican." She looked at me, confused and
> bewildered and said, "Don't you mean 'Hispanic'?" I said, "No, ma'am, I'm
> Mexican." She used to be very nice to me and Miguel and now I notice that she
> makes faces at us, I see her whispering to other teachers and parents while staring
> at us, it's very uncomfortable for us. But, I'm also not backing down. At work
> it's the exact same thing, when I correct them politely about not being Hispanic,

they catch a fuckin' attitude. Fuck them if they are gonna do me like that. I know that it causes tension in these situations, I know I could have had more promotions if I hadn't corrected people or stood by being Mexican instead of Hispanic, but I'm not willing to give up my identity over one that I don't like.

Diego's reluctance to accept "Hispanic" and his verbal resistance caused him to be excluded from social and institutional resources. His resistance evoked feelings of anger, resentment, and dislike from his son's teachers as well as his co-workers and in doing so, positioned him in a lower rung of his professional and personal networks. His access to promotions, job opportunities, etc. were limited by his action in not only correcting others, mostly whites, but by firmly standing by his decision to identify as "Mexican." Thus, Diego was offered the gift of whitening via "honorary whiteness" (Bonilla-Silva 2002), which he rejected outright. By rejecting this gift from his white peers and firmly positioning himself as "Mexican" he distances himself from the national rhetoric of "American", giving whites a nationalistic justification (under the belief that his rejection of whitening is anti-American) for their racism.

CONCLUSION

This chapter addresses the complexities of racial self-identification among Latin Americans of Mexican descent residing in Brazos County, Austin, Houston, and San Antonio, Texas and the relationship between structure and agency. As we see, while structures operate in ways that stifle or confine, individuals are still able to make decisions about their identities, albeit sometimes constrained. Given that a majority, but not all participants, identified as "Hispanic", this highlights the complexities of how racial self-identification processes are structured. Furthermore, the individual acts of

racial self-identification among people of Mexican descent become embedded in larger processes of race, racialization and white supremacy. That is, "Hispanic" and "Latin@" operate as imposed, social distancing tools that function to make whites feel more comfortable around Mexicans while also creating racial divisions and distancing within Mexicans as an attempt to reach higher positions in a white-dominated racial hierarchy. However, adopting "Hispanic", as was the majority case of those in this study, does not indicate assimilative behaviors, but rather functions as an attempt to gain access to resources through a change in nomenclature although not necessarily culture. Those who identified as "Hispanic" did not follow many of the steps outlined in assimilationist theory (Gordon 1964), instead they understood that white supremacy was at the core of racial structure and opted to distance themselves from "bad Hispanics" as a means of accessing racial resources. In doing so, those identifying as "Hispanic" and distancing themselves from "bad Hispanics" understand that "bad Hispanics" occupy the lowest rungs on the racial hierarchy where the racial consequences are the greatest.

Another important observation described in this chapter is the process of elimination through which Mexicans are racially identifying given that racial categories mean different things in Mexico than they do in the U.S. Results from recent U.S. Census Bureau and Pew Research Center reports indicate similar findings, where the population of Latin American descent residing in the U.S. does not identify as "Hispanic" or "Latin@" (except the state of Texas) but rather have preference in identifying by area of national origin. Thus, racial identity measurements in governmental agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau operate as macro level racial

projects that impose white supremacist misunderstandings of racial identity as a means of propagating white control and manipulation of the racial hierarchy given that the Latin@ population in the United States has exponentially grown since the 1800s, yet racial classification labels have only recently been changed to allow for open-ended responses (2010 Census) and more in-depth responses using the Race and Hispanic Origin Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE).

This chapter highlights the ways in which Mexicans in romantic relationships or marriages with whites racially self-identify. It is not meant to be exhaustive of all the elements of race among this population, however it does show that despite adopting "Hispanic" for a milieu of reasons as well as resisting "Hispanic", reaching whiteness, or the highest rung in the racial hierarchy, is not possible for them to attain and only sometimes and under certain circumstances will they ever access the same resources as whites.

CHAPTER VI

RACIAL AND ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND RACIAL LITERACY

AMONG WHITES IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH LATIN@S OF

MEXICAN DESCENT

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades a number of scholars have explored the construction

and practices of whiteness (Waters 1990; Alba 1990; Hale 1998; Lipsitz 1998; Delgado

and Stefancic 1997; Hill 1997; Mahoney 1997; Winant 1997; Keating 1995; Allen 1994;

Frankenberg 1993; Roediger 1991). As such, much of this literature discusses the socio-

historical processes through which "whiteness" is constructed and maintained.

Similarly, other scholars have focused on how whiteness is embedded and reproduced

(Dyer 1997). Moreover, current demographic changes, namely the shrinking of the

relative size of the white population and the growth of the Asian and Latin@ population

have emphasized that whiteness exists "as a racial category rather than a default

identity" (McDermott and Samson 2005:245).

This chapter examines the ways in which whites in romantic relationships and

marriages with Latin@s of Mexican descent racially and ethnically self-identify

themselves. More specifically, I focus on the shifts in ethnic identification, namely the

shifts away from symbolic ethnicity to what I have labeled "ethnodetachment". I define

"ethnodetachment" as an adoption of "white" as an ethnic identity that moves beyond

previous ideas of "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans 1979) to a complete detachment from any

ethnic identities or characteristics and in which whiteness becomes pervasive and permeated in both racial and ethnic identities among whites in order to retain whiteness and create further social distance between whites and non-whites. This chapter discusses the patterns observed in white ethnic self-identification (namely, the adoption of "white" as an ethnicity, or, what I call "ethnodetachment") and the behavioral and attitudinal changes in whites' perceptions of race and racism (namely what France Winddance Twine (2007, 2011) calls racial literacy in particular how white parents learn about issues of race with regard to parenting, motherhood and fatherhood.

FINDINGS

When I began this project I expected to find slight variation in how whites self-identified ethnically as well as a discussion of changes in attitudinal behaviors associated with race and ethnicity. However, I did not expect to find that by location and gender, overwhelmingly whites identified racially *and* ethnically as "white". Table 3, shown on page 85, shows how participants identified by gender and location. Racially, it is not surprising that participants identified as "white"; however, it was surprising that given the historical use of "Anglo" as a racial identification in Texas, it was hardly ever used among participants, regardless of location and area of origin (those who did identify as "Anglo" were men in the San Antonio area). Moreover, 44% of participants of European descent (not including Spanish and Portugal) ethnically identified as white and the remaining 66% was scattered throughout other categories including Anglo, Native American, Irish, American, Greek, English, Polish, German, Croatian, Cajun, Honorary

Hispanic, Unknown and more than one ethnicity. When looking at the gender

distribution of self-identification, Table 3 shows that 40% of women and 47% of men of

European descent ethnically identify as white. Furthermore, when individually

examining area of residence, the majority of participants also responded as "white" with

the exception of women in San Antonio, men in Austin and women in Brazos County,

areas in which an equal amount identified as "white" as they did with another label.

Beyond asking participants *how* they racially and ethnically identified, I was also

interested in *why* they identified in that manner, how they learned about their identities,

and if they had experienced any changes as a result of their interracial relationship.

Among the responses, two themes emerged: (1) white ethnodetachment as a microlevel

racial project that moves beyond symbolic ethnicity, eliminates any association with a

white ethnic group, reinscribes and reifies white supremacy, creates further distance

between whites and non-whites; and (2) whites gaining a different understanding of race,

racism and race relations, or what France Winndance Twine calls *racial literacy* (Twine

2004, 2011; Twine and Steinbugler 2006).

Ethnodetachment

In her work on optional ethnicities, Mary Waters (1990, 1996) discusses the

ways in which whites have the option of picking and choosing among their various

ancestries, ultimately deciding which, if any, they should actively claim and under what

circumstances. Waters (1990, 1996) also emphasizes that whites with no visible or

specific ethnic characteristics have this agency to select the ethnicities that they would

like to identify with as part of white privilege. Claiming an ethnic identity, especially when one has the ability to choose from an "acceptable" set of options (the popular Italian or Irish versus the unpopular Scottish and Scot-Irish) in many ways lets whites feel special and interesting, especially when whites are often portrayed as not having a culture. Thus, it is only possible for whites to experience symbolic ethnicity since "discrimination and social distance attached to specific European backgrounds has diminished over time (Waters 1996:199). Furthermore, systemic racism, white hegemony and white privilege continue to exist and function to preserve Eurocentric beliefs, stereotypes, othering and xenophobia.

The data from this research also highlights the ability of whites to choose their ethnicity and under what circumstances; however, the choice of ethnic identity among participants showed that while the options still exist and symbolic ethnicity still operates within whiteness and white privilege, participants ethnically identified more with "white" than they did with any other ethnicity. I find that this whiteness as ethnicity functions to promote colorblind and post-racial ideologies, and thus this ethnodetachment, which I have defined as the adoption of "white" as an ethnic identity that moves beyond previous ideas of "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans 1979) to a complete detachment from any ethnic identities or characteristics, allows whiteness to become increasingly more pervasive and permeated in both racial and ethnic identities among whites as well as in the racial hierarchy. Ethnodetachment then, refers to changes in how whites ethnically identify, shifting from using an ethnic label such as "Irish" or "German" to the adoption of "white". This marks a difference in how ethnicity has

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come to be conceptualized among white ethnics, namely a disappearance of ethnic identities. Despite the changes in the adoption of specific labels to a broad, pan-ethnic label, this shift does not indicate a change in attitudes, beliefs or behaviors towards racial and ethnic others, but rather remains within the realm of whiteness, systemic racism, and colorblind racism.

Identifying as "white" ethnically was a racialized discursive tactic used among participants that helped them feel good about themselves (and in their minds appear as non-racial) while making racialized comments about others under the guise of colorblindness (exemplified by comments such as "I don't see color"). For example, Robert, a 30-year-old white man residing in San Antonio, who identifies as white ethnically and is married to Alicia, a 26-year-old woman who racially identifies as Hispanic and ethnically as Mexican, said the following about racial and ethnic identities:

> **Jennifer:** How do you racially identify?
> **Robert:** As white, but… to this day I don't really see color. I mean, yes, it exists, but… as long as they, you know, spoke like me and were educated, who cares what they look like? If I can carry an intelligent conversation and not have to correct your grammar…
> **Jennifer:** And, how do you identify ethnically?
> **Robert:** White.
> **Jennifer:** Why?
> **Robert:** Well, like I already mentioned, my ancestry is Scottish, Irish, English, German, but those are ancestries, those are stories of where we came from, I don't identify with any of those… I didn't live through those experiences. It's fun to think about, you know, all the stories I told you about my family, but that doesn't matter to me, that was then. I grew up here and don't have direct ties to any of that. I didn't have to escape my country and establish myself somewhere new.
> **Jennifer:** So, white is a better label?
> **Robert:** Yeah, I mean, I just don't care about it. I'm white, people like me are white, there's no need to complicate it and create divisions. I can't say that I have connections to any of those places where my family came from, I'm American, I'm white, that's just how it is.

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Robert's commentary on not seeing color but requiring that those who he interact with use correct grammar and speak English correctly speaks to racialized notions of language where people of color are deemed to speak "incorrect" or "bastardized" English through slang, African American English, Spanglish, etc. Robert practices impression management by establishing himself as not a racist when the topic of race is introduced, a semantic maneuver commonly used in colorblind racist practices (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000). Robert's self-preservating, colorblind tactic is part of the new racetalk that allows whites to reproduce white supremacy through these roundabout ways of talking about race in public spaces and simultaneously retaining racial status quo.

Towards the end of this particular part of our conversation, Robert started getting frustrated with my questions about his ethnicity. His stuttering and fumbling through his words showed that he was struggling to find what he thought were the appropriate words to say without coming off as racist. In the end, he ended our discussion about ethnicity because he thought it was divisive to speak of race and ethnicity as still problematic, which exemplifies how the discussion of ethnicity has now become part of colorblind narratives where it is unacceptable to discuss ethnic difference in the same way in which discussing race or racism has become unacceptable. Thus, adopting "white" becomes the default for whites like Robert who ultimately want to distance themselves from identities that could be perceived as "too ethnic" and that promote ethnic difference. To be "too ethnic" or to have ethnic pride has then become an indicator that racial and ethnic differentiation is no longer acceptable in a colorblind and post-racial society.

Furthermore, symbolic ethnicity is still one of the options available for whites, who can choose, and often go back and forth on this, between identifying by their symbolic ethnicities or through ethnodetachment. Kate a 28-year-old woman who racially and ethnically identifies as white, who is from San Antonio is married to a self-identified racially Hispanic, ethnically Mexican, man also from San Antonio, said the following about her family ancestry:

> **Kate:** So, my mom's side of the family is of Swedish descent, but we really don't have a connection to Sweden in any way. I mean, we joke around whenever we go to Ikea that we're in the motherland, but it's highly superficial. You know, in the same way that people claim they're German or Irish or whatever other ethnicity. I mean, c'mon, none of us white people really have much of a connection to our country of origin, at least not those of us who have been here for a long time.
> **Jennifer:** So, then you don't ethnically identify with Sweden. How do you ethnically identify then?
> **Kate:** Like I said, being Swedish is superficial, we joke about Ikea, but we don't identify as anything other than being white. We're American through and through, our memories, traditions, holidays, they're all here, we don't have anything special from other parts of the world.

Kate's identity admittedly, and jokingly, fluctuates between being symbolic when she goes to Ikea and ethnodetached under all other circumstances. Moreover, she conflates "white' with "American", a commonly used systemically racist tactic that distances all non-whites from being "real" Americans. Additionally, this allows whites to speak of symbolic ethnicity in discursive ways that places ancestry and heritage as fairytalesque accounts of greatness and individual achievement (Waters 1996). These stories function to establish whites as people who have faced hardships and overcome these to succeed and assimilate as "Americans," ultimately suggesting colorblind standards that everyone

in the U.S. has had ancestors who have experienced difficult times but only some (e.g.,

white ethnics) have been able to achieve assimilation through hard work.

Other participants similarly discarded the conversations about ethnicity as

irrelevant and making something out of nothing. The discomfort experienced by whites

as they discussed their own ethnicity was especially noted in the 10 interviews where

couples were interviewed jointly. Paul, a 47-year-old racially- and ethnically-identified

white man from Oceanside, California, married to Miriam, a 44-year-old racially

Mexican American, ethnically Mexican woman from San Antonio, Texas, both of whom

currently reside in Austin, Texas, were interviewed jointly. Paul's discomfort and

agitation toward Miriam and myself was obvious when I asked them both about their

ethnic self-identification:

> **Jennifer:** And, for ethnicity do you have a preference?
> **Miriam:** I identify mostly with being Mexican and I think that's why for my race I like to identify as Mexican American, because it includes my ethnicity or descent directly into my identity and it's easier to explain.
>
> [**Field note**: Paul fidgets, looks around at other people sitting near us at the coffee shop. He is leaning forward, his hands cupped together while his fingers move faster and faster, sometimes clutching his hands until his knuckles are white. He is tapping his right foot at increasing speeds and during this part of the interview spoke in a very low voice, as if paranoid or concerned that others would hear what we were talking about and express dissent or that he would not fit the current white conventions of not talking about race publicly.]
>
> **Paul:** I don't really identify with anything in particular or specific. I'm just white, I'm as white as it gets.
> **Jennifer:** And, why do you identify in these ways?
> **Miriam**: I –
>
> [**Field note:** Paul interrupts Miriam and heatedly interjects.]
>
> **Paul:** I just don't understand the point of discussing that. I'm white, that's it, that's all it is. Why do *you* people always have to ask about these sorts of things?

What does it matter how and why I identify? Racism doesn't exist anymore, we are past all that. That was then, this is now, I don't know why you keep asking about this, why this is of any importance.

Paul's physical and verbal disagreement with discussing race and ethnicity not only managed to evade the question, but also functioned as an attempt to distance himself from any discussions about race or racism not only in a public space, but in the front stage of behavior (Goffman 1959; Picca and Feagin 2007). This behavior among whites privileges their own disruptive behavior over the voices of people of color and are often gendered practices as this example shows. Among participants, interviewed separately and jointly, white men overwhelmingly spoke in ways that were dismissive of their female Mexican partner's responses or inclusively dictated what topics of conversation were acceptable and which were not, functioning as the ultimate gatekeepers of front stage behaviors inclusively when those partners were not physically present.

It is hard to say whether whites identifying ethnically as white was a product of evolving colorblind practices in public and to a complete stranger interviewing them or if these ethnodetached, socially distant ethnic tactics are part of a larger shift in white identity that are still embedded in colorblind racist tactics. From participant responses I would argue that the shift in ethnic identity is part of a larger colorblind racist maneuver as a means of appearing "post-racial" or of avoiding being singled out for the option to ethnically choose under any and all circumstances given their white privilege. This is problematic in that it implies that there is a very conscious understanding among whites that race and racism are still macro-level social issues, ones that are generally acknowledged to be present at an individual level with just a few "rotten apples" acting

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these beliefs out; and, that although these issues of systemic racism exist, working towards models of social and racial justice take the backseat to white self-preservation and impression management.

Racial Literacy and Whiteness

Racial literacy, a term coined by France Winndance Twine (2004, 2006, 2011) is "a way of perceiving and responding to the racial climate and racial structures individuals encounter" (Twine and Steinbugler 2006:344) and is usually only acquired by non-whites (Twine 2006). Furthermore, racial literacy is a set of practices devised by parents and others to teach children how to identify, react to, and stand against daily racist practices. Because interracial intimate spaces also produce and transform racial meanings and thus are important sites to consider in which ways white partners develop more racially conscious frameworks to view themselves, their partner, and their relationship. In particular, this section will describe the ways in which white partners come to recognize everyday racist practices. That is, they develop a different analytic lens to examine their own behaviors as well as their friendships and social interactions with other whites. In this way, through a set of six stages as outlined by Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997), whites learn about racial structural issues in a way that allows them to move beyond individual racism and recognize racism on a structural level. The second stage of this process as outlined by Tatum (1997) is that of "disintegration" which is,

> marked by a growing awareness of racism and White privilege as a result of personal encounters in which the social significance of race is made visible. For some White people, disintegration occurs when they develop a close friendship

or romantic relationship with a person of color. The White person then sees firsthand how racism can operate (Tatum 1997:96)

In processes such as disintegration, the many forms of everyday racism that had once been invisible and unrecognizable to these whites become visible. Among participants I found two interesting behaviors: First, white women with children from their partnership with men of Mexican descent experienced alterations to their racial consciousness through public experiences with their darker-skinned children. Similar to the findings of Twine's (2004, 2006, 2011) work on interracial families in Britain and the U.S., these women had social encounters in which they were not perceived as the biological mothers to their biracial children. And, second, an increased awareness of their own racism, the changes they have made in their lives as a result, and a shift in social networks based on racism.

Below I present three participant profiles, which highlight many of the experiences of the white respondents in this study. The first examines the experiences of white women with children from their relationships or marriages with Latin@s of Mexican descent and the public, gendered, classed and raced social encounters in which they are not perceived as biological mothers to their children. The second exemplifies the experiences of whites interrogating their own racism as well as those around them and the changes they have made commensurate to this newfound awareness. And, the last example is of two profiles of white participants who "missed the point"; in this example I show how several participants did not interrogate their own racism or gain a sense of racial awareness towards others but continued living their lives in their

interracial relationship or marriage as if race was irrelevant to them and their sense of being as a couple.

Heather: Transracial Mothering

Heather is a 28-year-old brunette with hazel eyes who currently works for a biotechnology company and lives in Zilker Park, an upper middle-class, predominantly white neighborhood on the southwest of downtown Austin. It is very common to see people of Mexican descent in Austin, however they are predominantly located on the east side of Austin. She has been with her husband, Ricardo, a dark-skinned, first-generation Mexican man, for nine years, six of which they have been married. Ricardo is a first generation college-educated man who works as an architect. They are both educated and upwardly mobile professionals and homeowners who are firmly established in the middle class. They met as undergraduates at a university in Illinois, where they are both from. Heather's mother is an artist and her father is a teacher and educational services business owner. Heather's experiences as Ricardo's partner and wife and as the mother of their two young children have enabled her to use an aspect of racial literacy that provided her with the ability and know-how to interpret events that racialized her, privileged her as a middle class white woman and placed her as a non-member of her family with Ricardo.

> **Heather:** My biggest fear is that someone will think that they are not my children, not because they are not, but because their skin color and mine aren't the same. My best friend in Chicago, Molly, is also white and she's married to a very dark-skinned Mexican man. Their children don't look anything like her. She's blond with green eyes, she's very light-skinned and her children are very dark, have jet-black hair and brown eyes and have very Mexican names. She

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speaks enough Spanish to know when someone is talking about her and she always overhears whites and Mexicans questioning whether she is their biological mother or not. I'm scared that will happen to me, not that it hasn't, because it has.

Jennifer: Can you give me an example of how it has happened?

Heather: Let me think – yes, yes! I was at the Whole Foods near Lakeview, which is a really trendy area of Chicago and I was there when the boys were really young. I kept on running into these two Mexican women who were wearing their maid uniforms and clearly shopping for food for their employers. I ended up in the same checkout line as the two maids and there was this young, white woman at the cashier. She said to me, "Oh, that's so nice of you to bring the kids with you." I was so confused why she would say that, don't other women bring their children to the grocery store? She then says to me, "It's so nice to see people care about their employees' children like they're their own." I stared at her in bewilderment for what felt like hours but really were seconds, and said, "These are my kids." At first she looked ashamed, then she looked at the two Mexican maids behind me who were also staring at her, then she started fumbling and trying to apologize. As I walked away, I heard one of the Mexican maids say to the other, in a very audible voice, "Really? Can you believe she thought we would let our white 'employer' parade our children around like they were hers?"

Heather describes an interaction where she is assumed to not be the biological parent to her two sons but rather a white employer who plays or interacts with the maids' children as an uncommon nicety among upper-class whites. The white cashier does not associate Heather's interaction with the two young, dark-skinned boys as one that is representative of a mixed race family and simultaneously disassociates Heather from interracial intimacy because a white upper-class woman is not generally thought of being intimately involved with a man of color. Heather, and other respondents with similar stories, expressed frustration, a sense of invalidation as mothers and partners and like the white women in Twine and Steinbugler's (2006) research, felt like "their Whiteness symbolically excluded them from their families of reproduction in public spaces where others resisted seeing them as members of a biological family unit" (p.353). Women

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like Heather become invisible as white mothers to mixed race children because the racist framework foundational to the U.S. deems it unfathomable that a white "respectable", middle-class, educated and professional woman would engage in a sexual relationship with a person of color (Twine 2007). The belief that women like Heather would only engage with children of color under temporary or leisure activities enables others, both white and Latin@s, to believe that she is respectable by not violating unspoken racial and gender understandings for middle-class heterosexual women.

The experiences of white mothers in public spaces, like the grocery store or work, in dealing with classed, racialized and gendered expectations equip white women with the ability to see racial bias in ways that they have never or would have never experienced had they not started a multiracial family with their non-white partners. This newfound racial awareness about how they are perceived as mothers, professionals, and middle-class women who go across racial boundaries allows these women to gain racial literacy that is usually transmitted intergenerationally among families of color as a way of understanding their own relationships and families as they are perceived by others within and outside of their own personal and professional networks. This new ability not only functions for white mothers to understand their own white privilege, how they are viewed and the racial expectations they must fulfill, but enables them to better provide guidance to their mixed race children more closely to how families of color intergenerationally transmit this racial knowledge and literacy, although not spanning the course of as many generations as is the case with families of color.

Zach: Gaining Racial Awareness Through Family

Zach is a 33-year-old white man from the San Francisco Bay Area married to Mariana, a 32-year-old Hispanic woman of Mexican indigenous descent from Laredo, Texas. In 2009, when they were interviewed, Zach and Mariana were both Master's students in College Station, Texas, and had been married for five years. Currently, they have been living in Vancouver, Canada for to pursue further education and recently had their first child, a daughter, in March of this year. Zach is a short, white man with green eyes, combed back, medium-length hair who wears non-descript clothing and has extensive tattooing on his arm. He is a visual artist focused on gaming animation. He is originally from the California East Bay area (northern California) and has primarily lived in white neighborhoods in California.

Upon their move to College Station, Texas, for graduate school, Mariana and Zach moved to a neighborhood located a few blocks from campus but in a neighborhood composed primarily of families of color. When asked to describe how he had changed since being with a woman of Mexican descent, in particular one with deeply rooted ties to the indigenous community in the southwest, Zach mentioned having an increased awareness of how pervasive racism was and a shift in his perceptions. While neither Zach nor other white participants were self-reflexive about their own racist biases or their own participation in the racist structure of the U.S., they did however acknowledge an increased awareness of racially problematic comments, looks, and actions among their personal networks. Zach recounts his experiences out in public in College Station:

> **Zach**: Man, I never thought of any of this. Mariana would always tell me about how people looked at her differently or how they would mutter things under their

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breath or whatever, and I never believed her. In San Francisco, we would never have those experiences, it's very common for people of different races to be together there, California is completely different. Here, I don't even know. Mariana and I will walk to school together and I notice it, I feel the stares burning into my head. I can hear the gasps and whispers. It sometimes feels uncomfortable to just hold hands in public, as if acknowledging that we are intimately together is too scandalous for people to know about. Sometimes, I don't even know if it is conscious or not, I try to protect Mariana from this, like a shield. I try to use my body like a shield against all harm, whether psychological or physical, I will protect her, no matter what because there are so many assholes out here.

I then asked Zach why he felt that people looked at them differently and he said:

Zach: I think that white people don't know what to do when brown and white date. It's okay for us to be "friends" you know, but if we become romantically involved it's a whole different story. I never realized that, there's been such a level of normalcy in our relationship until we moved here. Even in other parts of Texas, like when I've participated in Sundance with Mariana and her family, and I mean, like legit Sundance, you know, cooking, dancing, chanting, fasting, all that, there were never questions about why she would mix with me. I mean, of course I was seen as an outsider to that particular event because those are usually very private and closed off to non-indigenous people, but it was never about my relationship with her. I never felt ostracized in the way that I do here. For white people it's just not cool if you become romantically involved with people of color. For people of color, at least, from my experience with Mariana, it doesn't matter, it is what it is.

Zach also commented on his awareness of racialized comments and jokes from people in his personal networks. He mentioned feeling irritated and upset at people who made jokes with race as part of the subject. Although he does not always comprehend the issues with these jokes and comments, he immediately begins processing what was said and asks Mariana what it means. Through his interactions and experiences with Mariana and her family, plus a change of location where racism is much more overt and blatant, Zach was able to become more cognizant, reflexive and critical of practices he previously took for granted and even possibly participated in (again, there was no

indication of self-reflexivity about his own participation in racist practices, but one can assume that participants like Zach would not acknowledge or problematize their own actions and behaviors as a way of not losing face or admitting to a racially shameful past). This racial awareness and the very open conversations with his wife, Mariana, have taught him to deconstruct these comments and jokes and to understand just why they are problematic. As a result, Zach no longer tolerates these sorts of comments and jokes and has learned a new form of racial literacy that allows him to examine routine practices that are part of everyday racism. Furthermore, Zach has chosen to socially distance himself from people who he now views as racially problematic, whether part of his immediate social and professional networks or family. With family members, cutting the relationship was a bit more complicated and instead of burning the bridge entirely, participants like Zach would simply distance themselves and limit their interaction with those people.

Currently, Zach and Mariana live in a racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, located within a few-minutes-walk to shops, restaurants, leisure activities, entertainment, school, and their employment. Since their new identities as parents have developed, I have since followed up with them to discuss how having a family has affected their lives with regard to racial awareness. When I first interviewed Zach in 2009 he acknowledged a shift in his attitudes and behaviors related to race. Marrying Mariana had a deep impact on his life where he became more aware of comments, looks, and actions that were directly and indirectly about them. Since the birth of their daughter, Zach has become increasingly

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more protective of both Mariana and Citlali (their daughter), even in the racially and ethnically diverse city of Vancouver. In our follow-up interview, Zach mentioned that when they are out in public he is increasingly more careful with exposing Citlali to people, often hiding her with a blanket over the baby car seat or not going out with her that often. They have since returned from their first trip back from visiting Mariana's family in San Antonio, Texas, and Zach comments that even in San Antonio, a city with a significant number of people of Mexican descent and where white-brown romantic involvement is more common, he felt uncomfortable walking around as a white man with a brown child. He said he often felt like he was seen as a kidnapper or child molester because his daughter's darker skin did not match his and thus ruled him out as a biological father in many ways similar to Heather's account (although not as a gendered, racialized or classed practice of protecting whiteness through controlling white women's reproduction). Other fathers made comments similar to Zach's, often feeling physically or verbally establishing that they were uncomfortable discussing how they were perceived as non-parental figures. The trauma of these experiences often led these men to visibly shut down during these moments in the interview or to not speak much of the matter and insist that we move on to other topics. Because Zach was the most verbal about his experiences as a white father to a child who visibly had a different skin color than his, I chose to highlight his story.

Zach's intimate life and his views on race and racism have changed. He will never fully understand or have the same experiences as Mariana or Citlali will as visible women of Latin American descent. However, he has altered who he socializes with and

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who he includes in his personal and professional networks. He has shifted from a predominantly white network to one that includes primarily people of Mexican descent such as Mariana's family, friends, and colleagues. Although he has not admitted a previous or even current personal bias or racist past, Zach now sees things from a different analytic perspective, that of his visibly Latina wife and daughter.

Alan and Corey: Missing the Point

While a majority of participants did gain a sense of racial awareness and racial literacy, there were those who did not. Below I give an example that highlights the experiences of a handful of white participants in this study who did not gain a sense of awareness or racial literacy. This particular example shows the racialized, classed, and gendered privileges that many whites retain and do not interrogate even when they are in a romantic relationship with a person who racially identifies as non-white and is firmly established in their Mexican ethnicity and background.

Alan is a 35-year-old man from San Francisco, California, who racially and ethnically identifies as white and is in a relationship with Sandra, a 32-year-old racially Latina, ethnically Mexican American woman from Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. They both currently reside in San Antonio where they are graduate students. Alan is the son of an upper-middle class family in California and Sandra is from a lower-class family of immigrants from Mexico. Alan's parents have financed both his and his siblings' undergraduate and graduate degrees from prestigious universities throughout the U.S. Whenever he has been in need of anything or in financial binds, including needing

money for car repairs, airfare home, books, conferences, clothes, groceries, etc., his family has given him as much financial support as he has ever desired or asked for. Alan had an unlimited amount of cultural, social, racial and educational capital that was not available to others. Alan spent the six years between his undergraduate and graduate education traveling around the South America and Europe, working odd jobs here and there in the U.S., and assisting his father, who is a folk musician and record producer. His experiences with people beyond his privileged background are incredibly limited and his ability to analytically reflect on the experiences of others are stymied by his background.

Sandra, on the other hand, has filled her life with a wealth of involuntary experiences regarding gendered, classed, and racialized barriers limiting her access to educational, social, political, and reproductive resources. Sandra's father was enlisted in the Mexican army for a few years before migrating to the U.S. on a work visa to work security for a Mexican national with extensive businesses in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Her mother was a stay at home mom who sewed dresses and curtains as ways of making extra money while her husband was away in the U.S. working. Eventually, her father remained in the U.S. after his visa expired and slowly found ways to bring his three children and wife to McAllen, Texas. In 1986, the whole family was granted legal permanent residence through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and in 1994 became U.S. citizens. She grew up in a predominantly Mexican, highly impoverished area of Texas. Her father gained employment as a security officer at a shopping center before finally obtaining a position at the Sheriff's office. Sandra has

paid for her entire undergraduate and graduate education with student loans, which she is

reaching the maximum cap of and is contemplating working a full-time job in addition to

her part-time graduate assistantship just to make ends meet and help her aging parents

out. She is the youngest of the three children and her parents have high expectations that

she will be their primary caretaker both with regard to financial matters as well as

health-related ones. Her parents do not understand why she is pursuing a doctoral

degree instead of finding gainful employment that will help her not worry financially

and help them out.

When I asked Alan to describe how he met Sandra and what about her made her

appealing to him, Alan said:

> **Alan:** I had never seen anyone like her before. She was stunning, she had the
> most beautiful caramel skin, the nicest smile I had ever seen, and she was always
> very attentive to people around her. I remember running into the mutual friend
> who introduced us when she was deathly sick and Sandra, without hesitation,
> told us to wait, jumped in her car, went to the store and bought Alison some
> vitamin C, orange juice, tissue, cough drops, tea, medicine, you name it, I
> thought she had come back with the entire pharmacy. But, I loved it, I loved how
> she cared after Alison and everyone else without ever expecting others to do
> anything for her. And, really, she hates it when people do anything for her.

Alan's description of Sandra fetishizes her for her darker skin and diminishes her to

gendered behaviors of support as attractive. Furthermore, racial awareness and

understanding has been a major struggle in their relationship. Sandra has attempted to

discuss her experiences being chased, followed, and criminalized or treated as the help in

shops and grocery stores for having brown skin. Alan reacts to her recounting these

incidents by diminishing and invalidating them with comments such as "Oh, you're just

reading too much into it" or "You're just too sensitive." In response to these reactions,

Sandra and Alan began testing her sensitivity with a game that in reality is a set of microaggresions and offenses towards Sandra that she takes on to prove a point to Alan, whose racial awareness and perceptions of racism in American society are nonexistent. In this game, they go window shopping at the mall and make note of the behaviors of people in their surroundings. Alan perceives that he too is a victim of harsh words and dismal looks based on his "California look" of long hair, Hawaiian shirts and sandals with socks. This behavior exemplifies what Jennifer Pierce (2003, 2012) calls "racing for innocence" arguing that it "is a discursive practice which functions simultaneously to deny accountability for racist practices at the same time that every day racism is practiced" (Pierce 2003:67).

Another participant who also showed a lack of awareness and racial literacy and engaged in "racing for innocence" was Corey, a 43-year-old racially and ethnically white man from Schertz, Texas, who is married to Ana María, a 40-year-old racially and ethnically Hispanic woman from Waco, Texas. Corey and Ana María met when they were children at an Air Force party (both their fathers were enlisted) but he did not realize that Ana María and her family were of Mexican descent. In the following excerpt from his interview, he recounts how he came to learn about "Hispanics" when he was in high school and how this affected his views on race today:

> **Jennifer:** What was your experience like with race growing up?
> **Corey:** …I—I didn't realize that Hispanics or who they were until I was in high school. I didn't really hear other languages until then and it happened at school. I heard it in the hallways, mostly Spanish, and I just thought it was a made up language. It wasn't until I asked someone what they were speaking that they said, "It's Spanish." And, I said, "What is that? Where are you from?" I didn't understand any of what was happening around me [laughs], now I think back on it and I think of what an idiot I was [laughs]. I like to tell people that story, I tell

> people that are Spanish-speaking that I've just met that I discovered Mexico when I was in high school [laughs] and that I felt like Christopher Columbus, except I didn't have La Niña, La Pinta, and the Santa María [in a very heavy, mocking, faux-Spanish accent].

Corey does not problematize this experience or his retelling of this story. Instead, he views it as highly entertaining, funny, and a cute story to tell people who experience everyday racism and who have to confront whites in their personal and professional spheres who find themselves entertaining with little stories like this while claiming to not be racist.

Both Alan and Corey are completely oblivious to how their words and actions affect their partners individually, and they also lack comprehension of how they themselves participate in a system of oppression that places them in privileged positions where their voices and experiences are heard (e.g., shopping game and likening to Columbus). What distinguishes Alan and Corey from Heather and Zach who gained some sort of racial awareness and racial literacy, is that they show a lack of analysis of how they have and continue to benefit from their position in the racial structure through their whiteness. Both Corey and Alan seemed unable to shift their way of seeing race despite being in romantic relationship with Mexican women or of placing their own racial positions at the center of analysis instead of invalidating the experiences of their partners and others. Neither of them confronted, addressed, challenged or discussed how their actions of creating a public game or blatantly proclaiming themselves as an infamous and violent colonizer, both of which are racist practices that reinscribe racial hierarchies, white supremacy and oppression, affected their partners and any children in their families.

CONCLUSION

        This chapter focuses heavily on white identity and whiteness in relation to white people in romantic relationships with people of Mexican descent with a specific focus on racial and ethnic self-identification as well as shifts in behavior including an increased awareness of race and racism and the development racial of literacy. More specifically, this chapter examined the ways in which whites ethnically identify as "white" instead of a symbolic ethnicity, a term I call *ethnodetachment*, as a strategic maneuver to retain white supremacy; and, the ways in which white partners develop, or not develop, racial literacy through their experiences in interracial partnerships and families, as well as some of their more racially enlightening experiences that make them more racially aware not just to how race operates in pervasive, systemic ways in the U.S., but how this directly affects them, their partner and their families.

        While the first practice of *ethnodetachment* reinscribes white supremacy and privilege and the second is a personal, but external experience to whites (through their racialized partner), their sense of being conscious about being white and their own subjectivity is non-existent. Many, if not most, participants lacked self-reflection about their "possessive investment in whiteness" (Lipsitz 1998) and their own positionality in participating and reproducing the racial hierarchy. Thus, in their everyday practices as individuals and as one half of an interracial, romantic partnership, they are rarely self-aware, a practice that is the most difficult among whites interrogating race and racism (e.g., it is easier to interrogate race and racism as external to the individual, present in

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the actions and words of others, than to be self-reflexive and interrogate one's own racist beliefs and practices).

Additionally, both the practice of adopting whiteness as ethnicity and the development of racial literacy or racial awareness are not in fact actions that are done for the benefit the partner of color—instead, they serve to make the white partner feel better about themselves, promoting the idea that they are not racist and are in fact colorblind. That is not to say that developing racial literacy is not beneficial to whites as parents to multiracial children. Indeed, learning to decode racialized language and behaviors is beneficial for white parents of multiracials to conceptually understand the hardships their children will endure. However, in terms of the white partner becoming racially progressive or even adopting anti-racist practices with the purpose of combating the oppression of people of color and white supremacy, those behaviors were non-existent among participants. Feeling racially awake and aware or like they had finally had a moment of racial clarity ultimately had a self-serving function among whites that reinscribes whiteness, white supremacy, oppression and the "possessive investment in whiteness" (Lipsitz 1998).

CHAPTER VII

WHITE PARTNERS IMPOSING "HISPANIC" ON THEIR ROMANTIC PARTNERS

OF MEXICAN DESCENT

INTRODUCTION

Beverly Tatum (2000) argues that in American society, some identities, especially those associated with whiteness, are privileged over others. If this is the case, who has the power to determine which identities are privileged? In the U.S., a country built on notions of meritocracy, there is an assumption that there is equal opportunity for everyone – through hard work one can earn opportunities and access to resources. The question then becomes whether equal opportunity can exist in a structure that privileges some identities over others. In this chapter, I explore identity and the inequalities associated with identity. Specifically, for the purpose of this project, I examine how potential social inequalities regarding identity are manifested in intimate space, particularly in romantic relationships and marriages where one partner is white and the other is of Mexican descent.

Does one really make their own choices regarding their identity? If there is such a thing as choice when it comes to identity, does everyone have the equal opportunity to make these choices or are there barriers to these choices for some? I argue that intimate, romantic spaces, usually considered the safest and most comfortable spaces for individuals, are actually coercive spaces in which equal access to identity choice is not present. Because choice is a basic component of equality, the lack of alternatives and

choice for some creates unequal spaces and hierarchies even within these seemingly

innocuous and safe spaces. Therefore, I argue that choosing an identity, which is linked

with the availability of choices, is constrained because of racialized and gendered

categories.

FINDINGS

As I interviewed participants an important theme that emerged in the data was

one of imposed identities, at both institutional and individual levels, where Mexican

participants identified racially in one way, usually by national origin, even though the

racial classifications found in commonly used forms and interactions at school, work,

and in general did not include national origin categories but rather asked about

Hispanic/Latin@ ethnic origin. Furthermore, a significant number of white partners also

classified their partner of Mexican descent as "Hispanic" even when those partners

identified by national origin or by another label. The imposition of "Hispanic" as an

identity also attached a racialized meaning of what it means to be "Hispanic" for

Mexicans as well as for whites, including Americanization and/or generation of

immigration (for many partners of Mexican descent this included a family history of

settlement in Texas predating Spanish and American colonization), skin color, dancing

skills, language abilities, and assumptions about occupation[30]. Generally, white

participants imposed the identity of "Hispanic" as a racial category onto their partners of

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[30] Particularly, research shows that often professional, middle-class Latin@s are often mistaken for domestic workers or janitorial staff because of their darker complexions (Romero 2002; Vallejo 2009, 2012; Feagin and Cobas 2014).

Mexican descent, despite these partners racially identifying as "Mexican" or "Mexican American" and verbally rejecting "Hispanic" as a category that described their experiences. As a result, I have labeled this *Imposed Hispanicity*, which is institutionally bound, culturally and institutionally imposed, and as a result is not *freely* chosen by individuals, but rather coerced.

By exploring intimate, romantic space as a site where identity, status, and power are constituted provides insight into the ways people of Mexican descent adapt to and negotiate their position within the racial hierarchy, both inside and outside of their romantic relationship. The dynamic and continuous process of identity construction takes place in nearly every space within which Mexicans traverse. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) identify six "critical" sites where ethnic identities are constructed and reconstructed, including politics, labor markets, residential space, social institutions, culture and daily experience, to which I would add intimate spaces. These spaces are locations were, "social actors make claims, define one another, jockey for position, eliminate or initiate competition, exercise or pursue power, and engage in other activities that encourage or discourage, create or transform, and reproduce or ignore identities" (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:170). In this chapter I examine the ways in which *imposed Hispanicity*[31] operates at the individual level where "Hispanic" is used in order to make

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[31] For a discussion on the institutional level in which "Hispanic" is circulated and embedded into formal and informal practices (the macro-level racial project) and how participants speak about this imposition (including their resistance), see Chapter 5 on self-identification practices among participants of Mexican descent in this study.

the romantic relationship with a racial other acceptable and non-threatening to whites and whiteness (the micro-level racial project).

Intimate Imposed Hispanicity

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois (2012) developed the idea of "double consciousness" in *The Souls of Black Folks* to describe the tensions felt by many African Americans in the U.S. He argued that African Americans had to remember and enact cultural behaviors and norms from two cultures – their own and that of the "mainstream" (i.e., whites)—acting differently in each culture. This was often a painful process that left African Americans feeling fractured. This same struggle exists among people of Mexican descent who navigate spaces where they must follow the cultural behaviors and norms of their culture as well as that of the "mainstream" (e.g., whites). More specifically, in examining the romantic relationships between Mexicans and whites in Texas, which is historically embedded in a deep racial history of Spanish and American colonization, the imposition of "Hispanic" as a racial and ethnic identity serves the purpose of coercively creating distinctions between whites and people of Latin American descent which simultaneously and forcefully makes the double consciousness evident. Thus, for people of Latin American descent, crossing, or even muddling, the color line becomes impossible, making it unfeasible for "Hispanics" to be considered white despite the legal codification of "Hispanics" as racially white (Haney-López 2003), making them more likely to be considered "off-white" (Gómez 2007) or "honorary white" (Bonilla-Silva 2002). Mexicans in romantic relationships with whites then must navigate the

differences between their own cultural backgrounds and their cultural lives among non-Mexicans, in this particular case, whites. The "two-ness" described with regard to racial self-identification practices among Mexicans in romantic relationships and marriages with whites (Chapter 5) reveals more than just an identity struggle. It exposes the continual interaction that reproduces race and gender in unequal ways in everyday life. The next two sections particularly examine how white partners identified their Mexican partners in terms of race depending on their gender. First, I will discuss how white men impose "Hispanic" in racialized and gendered ways, primarily in coercive, authoritative ways. Then, I will examine how white women impose "Hispanic" also through coercive means but ones that are also gendered.

Racialized and Gendered Imposed Hispanicity: White Men and Mexican Women

Table 4 shows how white partners perceive the racial and ethnic identities of their Mexican partners (in percentages, by city of interview and in general), highlighting in red the actual self-identification of those partners. The green highlight indicates the highest percentages of Mexican partners self-identifying racially as "Mexican", especially in Austin and Houston (see Chapter 5 for a more in-depth analysis of self-identification practices), showing the discrepancies between how partners of Mexican descent self-identify and how their white partners identify them. Table 5 shows in more

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Table 4: White Perceptions of Mexican Partner's Racial and Ethnic Identities										
	San Antonio		Austin		Houston		Brazos County		Total	
Race										
Hispanic	90%	50%	70%	0%	90%	20%	75%	60%	80%	38%
White	10%	10%	0%	20%	10%	20%	5%	0%	6%	10%
Mexican	0%	10%	10%	40%	0%	50%	10%	20%	6%	28%
Latin@/Hispanic	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Latin@	0%	20%	10%	20%	0%	0%	5%	5%	4%	10%
Mexican American	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	5%	15%	2%	10%
Hispanic and Mexican American	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	2%
None	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Ethnicity										
Mexican	50%	70%	90%	100%	80%	80%	55%	90%	66%	86%
Hispanic	40%	20%	10%	0%	10%	10%	40%	5%	28%	8%
Mexican American	10%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Chican@	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	2%	0%
White	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Mexican Indigenous	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	2%
More than one	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	N = 10	N = 10	N = 10	N = 10	N = 10	N = 10	N = 20	N = 20	N = 50	N = 50

Numbers in black are the percentage of the white respondents' perceptions of their Mexican partners' racial and ethnic identities (that is, what they perceive the identities of their partners to be)

Numbers in red are the percentages of the Mexican respondents' self-identification (Table 2)

Table 5: Whites Imposing "Hispanic" on Mexican Partner*					
	San Antonio	Austin	Houston	Brazos County	Total
White Male	30%	40%	30%	40%	63.60%
White Female	20%	30%	30%	0%	36.40%
Total	50%	70%	60%	20%	44%
	N=10	N = 10	N = 10	N = 20	N = 50

*By imposing I mean that the Mexican partner identifies as something other than "Hispanic" but is identified by their white partner as "Hispanic" regardless of this.

detail the percentage of whites imposing "Hispanic" on their partners. In other words, Table 5 shows that overwhelmingly white partners across all locations imposed[32] "Hispanic" on partners who identified as anything other than "Hispanic", especially white men.

The Mexican partners often described two types of tensions surrounding the use of "Hispanic" to describe their experiences. The first is a tension between their own identification and how others in general perceived them racially and ethnically in their social interactions. The second is an intimate tension between how they self-identify and how their significant other perceives them, a tension that clearly generates a wide range of feelings toward white partners, primarily anger, resentment, resistance and outrage. This second tension is also linked to gendered, racialized expectations where

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[32] Although Mexican partners also imposed the ethnic identities onto their white partners, it was to a lesser extent (9 out of 50 partners; 18%).

"Hispanic" draws the line of perceptions of the "good" versus adopting a national origin

identity, which represents the "bad". These "double consciousnesses" often led the

Mexican partners, in particular the women, who felt like "Hispanic" was imposed on

them, to feel like they needed to alter their behaviors, manner of speaking, way of

dressing, etc. Angelica, a 37-year-old Mexican woman originally from Bryan, Texas,

but residing in Austin, Texas, who is married to Brad, a 38-year-old, white man also

from Bryan, who identifies Angelica as "Hispanic" even though she identifies as

"Mexican", narrates the following about the tensions between her and Brad:

> **Angelica:** Brad thinks it's cute to call me "Hispanic", he's just so wrong for it. He doesn't get it… he, he just thinks it's a word that he can call anyone that is brown. He's just… he's so white and he just doesn't get it. When we used to party I would wear a cute top and he would always say to me, "Are you going to wear THAT? I can see too much of your boobs." It made me uncomfortable and angry that he would say that. Ugh, it gets me mad just thinking about it. He had no complaints about shirts like that when we were first dating, but we get married and it becomes unacceptable for me to wear them. He… he has made some comments like, "Are you going to be one of *those* Mexican women that lets it all hang out like that?" It's so convenient, when I'm wearing "slutty" clothes I'm Mexican, but when I'm his goody good wife that covers them up, I'm "Hispanic." We fight about that all the time, I never complain about the ugly ass white socks he wears with everything, but I wear shirts that show cleavage and I'm the worst person on earth.
> **Jennifer:** So, when he would make these comments, would you change your shirt?
> **Angelica:** I do… for the most part… I mean, it pisses me off so much that even if I do change my shirt and we stop fighting about it, he, he… I'm still so pissed that it ruins the night for me, so although I change my shirt, I'm angry, I resent him for making me feel slutty when I don't wear them to cheat one him or something like that. I wear them cuz I like how I look in them, I look good, and my girls look good, so who cares if I show them off? Who cares if I'm married and showing them off? I do it for me, not for him.

Angelica's experience with her husband, Brad, speaks of the hypersexualization of

Latin@s that depicts Latinas as voluptuous, sexually promiscuous, sexpots and Latinos

as the "Latin lover"[33] archetype (Brooks 2010; Fregoso 2007; Rodríguez 2004; Berg 2009). Additionally, Angelica keenly picks up on how Brad changes the label he uses to refer to her—when she is sexualized through her "revealing" clothing, she is "Mexican," and as Angelica highlights, this causes a distinction in "goodness" between "Mexican" women and "Hispanic" women. Furthermore, from Angelica's reaction as to whether she changes any behaviors or how she dresses given Brad's response to her clothes, she hesitates to fully admit that she rejects how he sees and perceives certain behaviors, in this case ways of dressing. She later admits that she does, begrudgingly, change her shirt to accommodate Brad's beliefs about "Mexican" sexuality as improper and promiscuous, and, therefore, not a set of characteristics that Brad believes his wife should embody. In comparison, Angelica implies that Brad perceives "Hispanic" sexuality to be modest and demure, characteristics representative of wholesomeness and family-oriented women, which are "ideal" characteristics of a wife. Although Angelica's narrative does not show outright, overt coercion, it is part of the underlying focus of her experience. Brad's way of shaming Angelica for wearing a particular item of clothing, coupled with the use of "Mexican" to make the distinction and his disapproval clear (because if she is "Mexican" she is not the good "Hispanic" woman he

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[33] The "Latin Lover" archetype emerges when Rudolph Valentino, an Italian immigrant starred in *The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse,* a story of how World War I affected young Argentinian men. He infamously dances the tango with a woman who he flings to the ground and in subsequent roles continues to portray these sorts of images in ways that not only changed how screen lovers were portrayed but how love was portrayed on screen. Other actors have followed in Valentino's footsteps, "all maintaining the erotic combination of characteristics instituted by Valentino: suavity and sensuality, tenderness and sexual danger" (Berg 1990:296).

expects her to be) is a form of coercion (Gramsci 2000, 2007) used by those who have the power to define the situation (Cast 2003). In this case, Brad uses his power in the racial hierarchy as a white male to name which behavioral characteristics and fashion choices are acceptable for his partner and which are not. In doing so, he distinguishes between the expectations he has for his wife, a good "Hispanic" woman, and those of other, unattractive and immoral women, the bad "Mexican" women. This coercion speaks to the structural power of whiteness as it functions at an individual level, where racial power is utilized to shame people of color with the ultimate goal of "convincing" them to modify their "unacceptable" cultural behaviors in order to adopt "acceptable" behaviors such as those used by whites.

When asked about his thoughts about "Hispanic" women, Brad's response reveals a similar distinction:

> **Jennifer:** So, you previously identified Angelica as "Hispanic", why is that?
> **Brad:** Hispanic women are thoughtful, they look after their homes, their families, their children, everyone. They know what they're doing in the kitchen, how to clean the house, how to be supportive and how to behave themselves in public and in private. They are demure, modest, but still *muy caliente* in the bedroom, you know, they still know how to spice things up and keep their man. I think Angelica is like that. I see her as very kind, reliable, thoughtful, family-oriented, loyal and loving unlike some other Mexican women who are just out there showing it all to the world, wearing the skimpiest clothing and not giving a fuck about anyone but themselves. Angelica is not all about herself like THOSE women.
> **Jennifer:** And, by those women, you mean "Mexican" women?
> **Brad:** Yes. Mexican women. They're a whole different ballpark. I like Hispanic women.
> **Jennifer:** What else is do you think is the difference between "Hispanic" and "Mexican"?
> **Brad:** Really just that. I mean, I guess… I… I usually see "Mexican" women as fresh off the boat, you know, they just got here, they came here to have a ton of children and take money away from Americans. They drain the U.S. of all of its beauty and then when they don't get what they want they go and cry that they are

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being discriminated against and that they should get rights that are not theirs to have.

Brad's perceptions of "Mexican" are those that he considers unacceptable and unattractive, they represent morally reprehensible characteristics and behaviors whereas the women he describes as "Hispanic", including his wife, Angelica, are those he finds morally, physically, and behaviorally attractive and acceptable to be his partner. Moreover, Brad's description of "Hispanic" women also exemplifies the racialized gendered expectations, in particular those related to household and family labor, such as being a family-oriented, proud, good wife who takes care of the children, preparing and serving food, and who maintains a home in ways that reflect well on him. Additionally, Brad indirectly defines "Hispanics" as those who are assimilated and not of a recent migration experience, thus, inscribing an earned legal status into the definition of "Hispanic". For Brad, "Mexican" implies that the person is a recent immigrant who is exploiting the U.S. (and, thus, in his mind, a criminal), is promiscuous, and is seeking permanence in the U.S. via the birth of many U.S.-born children (what the news media and anti-immigrants usually refer to as "anchor babies" (Ormonde 2012)). Therefore, to identify as "Mexican" is un-American, threatening, exploitative of the American way, and should be eliminated.

Angelica and Brad's narrative is a very overt narrative of how and why *imposed Hispanicity* occurs. However, other participants spoke about these same issues of "Hispanic" as good and "Mexican" as bad in more covert ways and was particularly event from their reactions and defensiveness as well as their facial expressions, gestures, stutters, and other behaviors annotated during interviews that revealed that white

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partners understood how *imposed Hispanicity* functioned in their relationship and that

the imposition of this identity was never about their partner, but about finding

"acceptable" and "appropriate" partners that were simultaneous "different" or "exotic"

in comparison to previous partners or the partners of friends and family members (e.g.,

dating people of color because they are a "new" and "taboo" partnership while still

keeping within acceptable margins of non-blackness). Below, Miriam, a 44-year-old

woman from San Antonio, Texas, and Paul, a 47-year-old man from Oceanside,

California, who were interviewed jointly in Austin, Texas, where they reside, said the

following during my interview with them:

> **Jennifer:** So, you met at a special event set up by Miriam's company at Camp Pendleton and later spending a significant amount of time preparing Paul's taxes, etc. Please tell me more about meeting, dating, etc.
> **Paul:** Well… you know… I… I had… n-n-never dated anyone that, you know wasn't white [Paul starts rubbing his arms and looking back and forth at his arms and those of Miriam, who is visibly darker-skinned]… I—I mean, I know people who are Hispanic and Asian and Afr—bl – black [Paul stuttered through finding what he thought would be the most politically-correct label to use for African Americans, hesitating and looking at my facial expressions for validation of his "progressiveness"] and Native American and, you know, even… [whispers] even… even Middle Easterners [Paul's facial and body expressions during this narrative were very expressive. His chest puffed up, beaming with pride about his knowledge of people of different races, except when mentioning Middle Easterners, during which he leaned forward, looked around him and then made eye contact before hesitating to say "Middle Easterners"]. But, you know, I didn't really meet people like that until I joined the Marines. There's a lot of diversity in the Marines.
> **Jennifer:** So, then what drew you to Miriam?
> **Paul:** Honestly, her skin color and how beautiful it made her. I had never really seen anyone's skin that color that close to me. I found it so beautiful and radiant and… you know… she seemed so fascinating and when she spoke of growing up in Texas, that was it. I wanted to know everything about her. Her world, her childhood, her family, it's all so different from anything I know. I just had to know it all, I had to see what she meant and what it was like to be around that many Hispanic people.

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> **Miriam:** He loved everything about what I told him, it was sick at first, I didn't even know if I was going to go on a second date with him because he seemed almost obsessed. The next thing I know, I run into him in L.A. when I'm out with some friends and he's out with his military buddies. It seemed so weird and I guess, I guess we couldn't let that coincidence slide.
>
> **Paul:** It was fantastic. And, after dating for a while, she met my parents, and I was pretty worried about their reaction. I come from a long line of good ol' American military families and well, you know, I didn't… I didn't really know how my parents were going to react to me dating a Hispanic woman. And, honestly [voice lowers, Paul leans in], my first thought was, "Well, at least she isn't black, it shouldn't be too bad." I have nothing against bl—black people… I—I… you know, I just didn't think that my parents would approve of me dating a black woman. They're from a different generation, you know? I'm—I'm not prejudiced, and neither are they—I've never seen them do or say anything against black people… I—I just think they wouldn't approve of it really.

Paul's response to not only his initial attraction to Miriam but how deeply interconnected his romantic life is to his family life shows that his experiences dating outside of his own race are influenced by an exotification and fetishization of Miriam as an "other" who he has no experience with but finds fascinating because of the marked differences between them. Additionally, the influence of how his family would perceive his interracial dating was a major factor in his decision to date Miriam, who becomes an "acceptable" mate for him given that she is not black. Later in the interview, Paul continues to talk about Miriam's suitability for him and his family. He mentions similar comments as those made by Brad about "Hispanic" women being more family-oriented, subservient, catering to their husbands, and not being promiscuous. Moreover, Paul includes a narrative about Miriam's career as an also racialized and imposed identity. Below he speaks of Hispanics lacking professionalism and Miriam being the exception:

> **Paul:** You know, the more I got to know Miriam, the more I realized she was the exception. She is an incredibly intelligent woman who has done a lot for herself in her life while also helping her mom and sister and brother and having a daughter at a really young age under those circumstance [Liliana, Miriam's

daughter, who is also part of the Austin sample, was born from Miriam's rape at the age of 14]. And, I just can't believe how much she has done in life and where she is at. She's a very knowledgeable CPA, she is damn good at her job, and she amazes me every day. When we first got married, this is really funny, I think you'll laugh… when we first got married, my parents, they—like I said, they're from a different generation, they're not prejudiced—they, um, they didn't think that she was a good accountant or CPA, they even thought she was the waitress the first time they met her. Now, this is the funny part, now, they won't trust anyone but her to help them out with their taxes. That's a huge accomplishment, you know, they—they don't just trust anyone with their money.

Jennifer: Could you tell me more about your parents' reaction to Miriam?

Paul: Like I said, they [starts laughing and shaking head], they totally thought she was our waitress the first time they met her even though she was wearing a suit and immediately greeted them and shook their hands… you know, very professional, very put together… but, but, I guess that didn't matter, they just thought she was the waitress and started asking her questions about the menu.

Miriam: Well, he's also stupid and didn't tell them beforehand that I was Mexican so it was a total surprise and shock to them. They probably didn't think that I was Mexican because my name sounds both white and Mexican, so I'm sure they couldn't tell just by the name and I think he had only told them that I was from San Antonio and that's it.

Meeting Paul's parents speaks to the racialization that Miriam experienced both from Paul and his parents— first, in that Paul is impressed by Miriam's education, knowledge, and professionalism, explicitly stating that she is an exception to the rule, which alludes to stereotypes of people of Latin American descent not having professionalism or not being able to "pull themselves from the bootstraps" in the same ways that whites do (while simultaneously ignoring social structural barriers to access to education, financial and occupational upward mobility, etc.). Miriam, like many other participants who experienced *imposed Hispanicity* from their partners, were the exception to the rule among white participant responses. Their lack of engagement in criminal activities including gangs, drugs, and "illegal" smuggling rings (these were some of the themes that emerged when asked about how partners were exceptional), sexual promiscuity,

"illegal" status and perceived lower class status including low paying employment, make them exceptions to the stereotypes usually held by white respondents, in particular those imposing "Hispanic" as a socio-racial distinction from national origin groups such as "Mexican".

Second, Paul's parents' initial reaction to Miriam as the waitress at the restaurant where they were supposed to meet his partner relies on the assumption that Latin@s and whites do not occupy the same socioeconomic statuses and spaces as whites, thus, Latin@s are suspected of lower class status due to their racial phenotype. Even the good "Hispanics", as opposed to the bad "Mexicans", fall under white scrutiny as occupying these lower socio-racial rungs, despite working in "professional" settings – despite Miriam's professional attire, polite, and well-mannered demeanor would not suffice to elevate her to a socio-racial status of acceptance from Paul's parents. Until Paul takes that first formal initiative to introduce Miriam to her parents and let them process their son's partner choice, do they modify their behavior and start slowly welcoming her (the length of that process is unknown by their narrative given that both Paul and Miriam skirt around that issue in later portions of the interview). Miriam, who understands the complexity of racial dynamics, highlights the importance of racial phenotype in interactions with whites by jokingly calling Paul "stupid" for not telling his parents that she was not just from San Antonio, Texas, but of Mexican descent.

Additionally, Paul's narrative is also defensive, he very cautiously makes sure to mention that his parents are so impressed with Miriam's expertise as an accountant and CPA that they do not trust anybody else with their money or tax information, suggesting

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that they could never be racist or discriminatory against her because she has "proven"

herself and her extensive knowledge in her professional field. Furthermore, he

immediately defends his parents' behavior by justifying their racist behavior as "not

prejudiced" and "from a different generation". These defensive strategies function to not

only defend whites and whiteness as they operate in privileging whites to not think about

the experiences of people of color (or to universalize the white experience as everyone's

experience) but further pushes towards colorblind racism in which "color" is irrelevant

(even though it is obviously relevant in the interaction between Miriam and Paul's

parents).

Indeed, this excerpt also reveals Paul's feelings about Miriam's expertise—his

shock that someone like Miriam, who indeed did not grow up with the same privileges

and luxuries as he did, was able to become not just successful, but more successful than

he is (Miriam is actually more educated, has a much more valued occupation, and makes

a significantly larger amount of money than Paul does) speaks of the racialized and

gendered expectations he has for someone of Miriam's background. Because she is of

Mexican descent, Paul expects people like Miriam to fulfill the stereotypically raced and

gendered roles that include Mexicans being lazy, not working hard enough to get an

education or a better their lives, and having extremely large families. Additionally,

because Miriam is exceptional and a "Hispanic" woman rather than a "Mexican"

woman, she fulfills all of Paul's requirements for an adequate and acceptable partner –

intelligence, drive, motivation, upward mobility, family-orientation, etc.—characteristics

and behaviors that the racial hierarchy (and whites who are at the top) generally attribute

to other whites but often not to people of color. Paul continues to allude to Miriam's exceptionalism throughout their interview because she, unlike other Latin@s, has managed to do as white people have in the past and pulled herself up from her bootstraps.

Paul's strategic use of *imposed Hispanicity* functions to remove the threat of the racial other from his partner. By labeling her "Hispanic", Paul justifies his relationship to a woman of color as benign and unthreatening—Miriam's professionalism, work ethic, education, occupation and success situate her under "Hispanic" because she is a "good" person of Mexican descent who does not pose racial threat to whites by being "too Mexican", "too ethnic" or "too racial". Under this perceived model of Hispanicity, Miriam, in Paul's view, is closer to whiteness than she is to Latinidad because she does not "appear" to be "Mexican" like others—she does not speak Spanish, does not celebrate "Mexican" holidays or act in the stereotypical "Mexican" ways that Paul attributes to be of "bad Mexicans" (gang activity, criminality, *cholas*, extensive families, etc.). Instead, in his view she is the exceptional "Hispanic" whose interests are much more aligned with whites and whiteness, characteristics that will help him retain his racial clout without losing status among his white peers.

Paul's limited experience with Latin@s prior to and during his partnership with Miriam is also laden with colorblind racism. First, his fetishization of Miriam because of her different skin color inscribes that there is a marked difference between them, which Paul acknowledges, but then pulls back from, reiterating that he is not prejudiced and that neither he nor his parents would ever maliciously do anything against anyone.

However, we see from both Miriam's and Paul's accounts of their first interactions that Paul was clearly obsessive and fetishistic about his new experience with a woman of color, to a point that Miriam eventually finds his behavior harassing until their serendipitous encounter in L.A. Second, Paul's omission of Miriam being Mexican is a clear indicator of colorblindness, to which Paul responded by saying, "I just didn't think it would be relevant to tell them that she was Mexican. I don't see how that is a factor in anything." His response exemplifies how consciously the racial hierarchy permits whites to not think about how perceived racial phenotype plays a part in interactions between people, in particular between people of color and whites. In this case, in the first excerpt of my conversation with Paul and Miriam, Paul acknowledges that Miriam being "Hispanic" will obviously affect the family relationship, even though he feels alleviated that she will not be chastised because she is not black. However, he later contradicts himself by stating that Miriam being "Hispanic" should not be an issue ever. The contradictions of colorblind racism are clearly delineated in Paul and Miriam's relationship.

Further into the interview I asked both Paul and Miriam to racially and ethnically self-identify as well as identify one another. Miriam racially self-identified as "Mexican American" while Paul identified her as "Hispanic." When asked why he identified her as "Hispanic" and not as "Mexican American," Miriam sighed heavily, rolled her eyes, crossed her arms across her chest, leaned back into her seat and muttered, "Here we go." Paul, feeling his partner's tension, leaned forward, looked around him and said,

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Paul: Well, you know, because… because when you're asked what you are, the choices are always white, black, Asian, Native American, and she's none of those. So, she's Hispanic, right?

Jennifer: So, you know she's Hispanic because that's what you've seen on different forms?

Paul: Yeah, I mean, that's what's there right?

Miriam: But you know perfectly well that I don't feel that way. I don't like to be called "Hispanic" and you know that. You know that growing up my mom was hit in school for speaking Spanish and that she was called "dirty beaner" and "manic Hispanic". It's very hurtful and you know how I feel about it but you still feel the need to call me "Hispanic".

Jennifer: Is there any reason why you do identify Miriam as "Hispanic" even though she fervently hates it?

Paul: Yeah—well—you know, um, I—I never meant it maliciously… I—I—that's just kind of, you know, what I've known for people, people like Miriam and, well, it's—it's hard to break old habits. I just always thought that was what people preferred to be called. I—I never mean to be offensive… I—I just don't always, you know, it's hard to remember what everyone prefers to be called. I try to be PC [politically correct] and I get yelled at, if I say "beaner", "spic", "wetback" or anything else I get yelled at. I can never win.

Paul's reaction to Miriam's outburst is apologetic because of Miriam's explanation about the collective memory of hurt and pain experienced by her mother and the racial literacy passed down through the generations about exclusion, abuse, and racial punishment. However, despite this Paul remains unapologetic about his continued use of "Hispanic" in reference to Miriam. Instead, he once again becomes defensive and justifies this behavior as never knowing what people prefer to be called and that all of his attempts to be "accommodating" to racial others backfire on him and he gets punished for this. While Miriam tries explaining to Paul the importance of her identity to her, Paul manages to play into white victimhood, what Tim Wise (2013) calls "whine merchants". Again, the use of "Hispanic" is not for the benefit of partners of Latin American descent, but rather for whites to feel better about using the "right" or "proper" nomenclature and impression management about not being perceived as racist. Imposing "Hispanic" then

functions as a self-serving strategy for whites to not be perceived as racist but rather as "good whites" who are victims continuously under racial attacks while simultaneously invalidating and ignoring the voices of people of color when it comes to matters of their own experiences and preferences.

Furthermore, making the conscious choice to impose Hispanicity to a partner because she does not exemplify racial stereotypes also speaks to the racial power in naming and defining the situation (Cast 2003), despite the onset of conflicts with the non-white partner. This racial power allows whites to make decisions as to who is acceptable and who is not and what characteristics must be met in order to be the exceptional racial other. Thus, *imposed Hispanicity* is a tool of racial power that allows whites to appear non-racist, manage their reputations with whites and people of color, and to determine worthiness of intimate partners. The use of this racial power creates tensions in intimate spaces that force and coerce partners of color to reluctantly accept their partners' perceptions and impositions despite conflicts and tensions surrounding these tactics. Although Miriam responds to Paul's mislabeling with verbal and physical protest, has to make the choice of continuing to fight over what Paul perceives to be a difference of opinion, including accepting the continued microaggressions and emotional labor that are part of that interaction, or just letting Paul continue to perceive her as "Hispanic". These choices are often difficult and complex, Miriam later in the interview said, "I have to choose, I have to just let it go or keep hammering him with it and I just don't have the energy anymore. I can't. I'll make comments and say something to him about it, but eventually I let it go. It's draining." Here, Miriam acknowledges the

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emotional wear that conversations about race and ethnicity have on her, not in a way that victimizes her like Paul's strategies of white victimhood, but rather in a way that clues us into how depleted she is of energy surrounding this topic and how she has to strategize for her own mental well-being by letting go of that particular subject so as to minimize tensions and conflict. Although never directly indicating feeling coerced or forced into ending the arguments about racial and ethnic identity, it is clear from Miriam's account that emotionally she is not only coerced into accepting that Paul will not change his opinion or take into consideration her experiences as a woman of color, but that she has to make a conscious choice of ending the tensions or conflicts surrounding the subject, even when Paul never ceases to talk about it with her, their children and family members or friends. By continuing to speak of Hispanicity and Miriam's exceptionalism, Paul claims racial power, names the situation, perpetuates racial stereotypes and the racial hierarchy, and establishes himself in hypermasculinized verbal ways as the ultimate voice, authority, and opinion on the matter while silencing his partner and her experiences.

Racialized Imposed Hispanicity: Gendered Tactics of Imposition, White Women and Mexican Men

It was no surprise that white women also imposed "Hispanic" onto their partners of Mexican descent; however, it is worth noting that the percentage of white women imposing Hispanicity is less than the percentage of white men who do so. Additionally, many of the same reasons discussed in the previous section about white men imposing

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"Hispanic" onto their female partners of Mexican descent stand true among white women. However, the gendered dynamics of *imposed Hispanicity* were also very prevalent among this group—namely, racialized and gendered assumptions about male Latinidad including hypersexualization, attributing certain skills (including dancing), and assumptions about their partners being *machistas* (a hypermasculine extension of gender roles specific to Latin American cultures; for more information see Baca Zinn 1982; Casas et al. 1994; De la Cancela 1981, 1986; Lara-Cantú 1989; Mirandé 1988, 1997). A common racialized conception of Mexicanness among white women was that of Mexican men as sexually threatening with an increased need to protect sexual purity and whiteness while "Hispanic" men were viewed as relatively "good", polite, and respectful. Furthermore, "Hispanic" men were also characterized as suave, god-like Latin lovers who were more romantic than men of other races. Courtney, a 30-year-old woman from Alaska in a relationship with Diego, a 35-year-old man from Houston, Texas, who both reside in Houston, mentioned the following about why she was attracted to Diego as it is interconnected to her racialized notions about his culture:

> **Courtney:** He's got that look, that long, black-hair, the dark skin, and, he's very romantic. He always brings me flowers, chocolates, little gifts, he tells me that he loves me and how much he appreciates me all the time. He's the sweetest and I never expected that from him. I thought he was going to be this really rough, very masculine, very angry man who would not show any emotion or affection. I was so surprised. I tell all of my friends that they need to date a Hispanic man because they will be treated and feel like queens. He reminds me of all the Latin lover images you see in really old movies. You know, the very loving and adoring and very sexual guy. He's like that, he's definitely very charming and flirtatious but he's just the sweetest ever and I've never been treated better and he's always been faithful to me. I never expected that from him when he told me he was Mexican.
> **Jennifer:** How did you meet?

> **Courtney:** We met on an online dating website and we would chat every night but he never mentioned that he was Hispanic and I mean he is kind of light-skinned so I just thought that maybe he was of Italian or Greek descent from his pictures. When we met he took me to the Second Ward, which is where he grew up. It's now a really nice neighborhood but what he was telling me was that it was a very Mexican neighborhood when he was growing up. I couldn't believe that this was where he was from and that in such a small period of time it had so drastically changed.

Several things can be highlighted from Courtney's description of Diego and his original neighborhood. First, her first impression that physically he does not fit the racial stereotypes of what "Mexican" men look like in particular the lightness of his skin and resemblance to European men, characteristics that made him even more physically attractive to Courtney given the Eurocentric views of whites regarding physical characteristics and the elevation of that which is European as superior to that which is non-European. Her surprise in finding out that he is of Mexican descent and grew up in a very impoverished and underprivileged area of Houston (which through gentrification has become a very upper-middle class area of Houston) contradicts every preconceived notion that she has had about "Mexican" men. Like the white male participants who were also shocked at how exceptional their partners of Mexican descent were, Courtney and other white women elevate their partners to "Hispanic" as a way of distancing themselves and their significant other from negative attributions of criminality, "illegality", violence, and morally reprehensible behaviors. For white women, "Hispanic" means having steady employment, having a legal status in the U.S., a man who sweeps them off their feet in fairytale fashion, and who is a Latin lover who is flirtatious, charismatic, and exceptional in both physical and verbal affection.

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Although white men and women share similarities in how they racialize people of Latin America descent, particularly their romantic partners, what differs are the ways in which white women talk about *imposed Hispanicity*. First, white women, while still defensive and performing white victimhood in relation to not being perceived as racist, stand by their assumptions about "Hispanic" versus "Mexican" despite their partners' self-identification in much more submissive ways. Second, the perceptions of partner suitability from white women is rooted in gendered notions of success and potential for providing financially for them and their future families.

Regarding gendered submissiveness, Georgia, a 27-year-old white woman from Detroit, Michigan, in a relationship with Antonio, a 28-year-old man from Mexico City, Mexico, who reside in Austin, Texas, says the following about the conflict between her and Antonio regarding "Hispanic" and "Mexican":

> **Georgia:** It's hard, it's definitely very difficult to disagree on something that I know he takes so personally. I just—you know, it's just how I feel about it. And, we fight and he explains and I explain and I understand what he means and he understands, I guess, what I mean, but you know, it's one of the things we fight the most about. Antonio always gets very upset at me and I try to do the best that I can and not aggravate him anymore, not because he would do anything to me, God forbid, no, no, it's more about not liking him to be upset. I want him to feel at his best all the time and I know that he always gets upset. So, I try not to bring it up ever, I try not to say "Hispanic" around him because I know how sensitive he is about it. But, I also can't ignore what I believe and how I feel about it. My mom has told me to just go along with what he says when he brings it up, which I've tried doing, but he sees that it's not real, that I'm doing it to make him feel better. I can't help it though, I want my man to be happy and I know this is a major point of unhappiness for him. So, I avoid the conversation at all cost with him.

Georgia's narrative shows how contentious this issue is in their relationship and how it affects their behaviors not just with one another but with others, including close friends

and family. She adopts very submissive tactics to avoid engaging in this type of conversation with her partner because of his reaction, not only because she does not want to upset him, but so that she does not feel like she has been a lousy or unsupportive partner. These sorts of gendered behaviors are part of how girls and women are socialized to not speak up, to not challenge other people's opinions, and to use soft and coded language that puts others' feelings above theirs. Georgia, like many of the white women, stood by her opinion regarding labeling Antonio as "Hispanic" instead of his preferred "Mexican" but did so in ways that still attempted to cater to and appease her male partner. Georgia's narrative shows that the racial power to name the situation functions in different ways compared to how white men use their racial power, largely in part to the hegemonic raced and gendered powers available to white men. While white men stand by their action of *imposing Hispanicity* onto their female partners of Mexican descent, they also do not waiver at their reactions. They claim to understand the discomfort and disagreement from their partners but because they are unaffected by how these react, they do not silence or modify their opinions but rather continue with the same behaviors. On the other hand, given that gendered socialization mechanisms promote ideas that women should cater more to the needs of men, it is unsurprising that white women in this study reacted by not silencing their opinions, but rather not voicing them or even modifying them for the purposes of making their partners happier and less combative. This gendered submissiveness is not only enacted by Georgia, but it is promoted by her mother, who transmits gender knowledge to her daughter through advice on how to keep her partner happy.

Secondly, and also embedded in gendered socialization and gender literacy is the procurement of a partner who can provide upward social mobility, financial security and stability, and who comes from a "good" family. For Georgia and many other white women, these expectations are highly racialized, where white men are ranked highest in terms of being "successful" and having the "potential to provide" for them and black men are at the bottom, generally seen as unfit for partnership because they are seen as "absent" partners and fathers with little potential for upward mobility or financial success and well-being. Georgia, for example, says the following about race when I asked her about her experiences dating Antonio:

> **Georgia:** I've become more aware of cultural differences between him and I. I used to think that everyone had similar experiences as I did, but being with him has shown me otherwise. There's a big difference in culture, and a big difference financially between us, which I didn't expect. I come from a very middle class family in Detroit, my mom is a schoolteacher and my dad is a pharmacist… when I first found out he was Mexican I thought, "Great, this guy is here on a scholarship [both Antonio and Georgia are graduate students] and will never amount to anything if he doesn't have a handout to take." I told my friends about my concern and their reactions were always, "Well, at least he's not black, so he *could* be different, he *could* maybe provide for you, but you'll probably have to work too and I know you don't want that." Don't get me wrong—I don't mind working, I'd love to be able to find a job that allowed me to teach Spanish literature to high schoolers, but that might be difficult, so I'm really going to need someone to have better financial stability than I will. But, then I found that his family has a lot more money than mine and they're very connected to the Mexican elite and the Mexican upper class… and, well, all of my assumptions about him went out the window, he's got great potential as a husband, father, academic, provider, etc. I feel really secure in being able to pursue my dreams with a man like Antonio by my side.

Georgia does not problematize her friends' comments about Antonio not being black, but rather skirts over it to get to the point that she initially felt like the racial factors affecting his perceived success, rendered him an unworthy partner. Instead, when she

finds out about his family's financial success and social capital, he instantaneously

becomes a worthy partner in her eyes. Again, for white women, Antonio's

socioeconomic status renders him exceptional in comparison to other Mexicans, in

particular other Mexican nationals who are viewed as "illegal", impoverished, very dark-

skinned and working in jobs with very little opportunity for upward mobility. For white

women, these "Mexican" characteristics make "Mexicans" unsuitable partners while

those who are the exception, like Antonio, become "Hispanic" because they are

acceptable, successful (or have the potential for success), and have a higher social capital

than they do.

Again, these comments often came from family members; in Georgia's case, her

partner, Antonio, recounts the influence of Georgia's parents on the racialized notions of

Mexicans:

> **Antonio:** When her parents first found out that I was Mexican, they had these same ideas of what it means to be Mexican that they were "concerned" for. Well, really it was a concern for the sake of their white daughter. And, they would make comments to her like, "Oh, so is he on scholarship?", "Is he taking the place of someone who is legal?"; "Is he a wetback?"; "Does he have a criminal background?" And, she always protected them and said that they were just concerned for her and that it wasn't that big of a deal that they would say these things.

He later goes on to recount their reaction upon meeting him:

> **Antonio:** They looked at me with jaws dropped. I had short hair then, no beard. I was very polite and respectful to them, and when they made comments about being Mexican and not looking like I was Mexican [Antonio is a fair-skinned Mexican national who passes for white], I kept dropping hints or making subtle comments about how racist that was. That shut them up. Plus, they think that they're from such a good family, don't tell Georgia I said this, but they really think so highly of themselves and I just want to turn around to both of them and be like, "You're nothing! I come from a very good family, with a lot more money than they could ever even imagine having, and much more educated and worldly.

Who do you think you are?" And, it's bad of me to think that, and I usually don't vocalize it, especially around her… and I know how problematic, classist, and elitist it is but they infuriate me so much with their racism.

Antonio's strategy of calling Georgia's family out for their racism shows that resistance and emotional labor are also major components of his relationship with her, a recurring theme found in all interviews where imposed Hispanicity was a present. Furthermore, it shows that although the imposition of not only labels such as "Hispanic" but of racialized notions of what it means to be "Mexican" and "Hispanic" are in place, participants of Mexican descent adopted strategies of resistance and agency. Men of Mexican descent were the most vocal about these strategies, often causing a great deal of discomfort among white partners and their families. Although they understood the tension this caused in their relationship, their agency was not something they were willing to give up regardless of their relationship and affection for their white partner. While white women held a relative amount of racial power in defining the situation and successfully imposing "Hispanic" onto their partners, men of Mexican descent held gendered power in defining how to enact their strategies of resistance. On the other hand, although women of Mexican descent also resisted and had agency against imposed Hispanicity, it never functioned to determine when the conversation about Hispanicity would take place. But rather, the combined racial and gender power of hegemonic white males overpowered resistance strategies and permitted them to continue not only defining the situation but controlling when and how the situation could be defined. While Mexican men elicited feelings of caution from white female partners, Mexican women often found themselves negotiating more selectively when and where to use their

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strategies of resistance and agency. Thus, white women, in comparison to hegemonic white men, also strategized about when, where and how to avoid conversations about imposed Hispanicity, however, they were never fully silenced but rather chose not to engage in conflicts about someone else's identity preference nor did they have to negotiate experiencing the emotional labor of explaining and combating the imposition of labels that are unrepresentative of their experience. In general, whites were not affected emotionally by the imposition of Hispanicity onto their partners, nor did they understand how imposed Hispanicity continuously fragments their partners of Mexican descent into the two-ness described by Du Bois (2012) and the psychological effects of navigating that two-ness in a racially stratified society. Furthermore, Mexican women often negotiated their strategies of resistance and agency taking into consideration that the struggles often did not just affect them, but often their children and extended family members.

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the dynamics of *imposed Hispanicity*, defined as the imposition of "Hispanic" as a racial identity onto people of Latin American descent which is institutionally bound, culturally and institutionally imposed, and an action based on the use of direct and indirect coercion and force by others, in this case, whites. Furthermore, I examined how romantic, intimate space, often considered the safest and most loving space, actually becomes the most coercive and confrontational space with regard to racial and ethnic self-identification. This chapter addresses the influence of the

imposer's race and gender on the imposee's self-identification, particularly as related to power and status. More specifically, I found that white males used their hegemony to not only impose Hispanicity but to assert power and control over discussions and situations in which racial definitions must be made. While white women held racial power, it was often limited by gendered dynamics such as submissive socialization and gendered expectations of silence and "good" partner retention.

Furthermore, these gendered and racialized dynamics speak to the larger social stratification in existence in the United States where social structure and institutions within that social structure are stratified by race and gender, identities too will be stratified, not because one chooses an identity that makes one "superior" or "dominant", but rather because the interaction between oneself and the social structure, institutions, and individuals within institutions, work to create these stratified identities. This process is fluid and continuous and functions outside of individual actions and choices and thus is not chosen. This un-chosen imposition of identity is based on not only the use of a label such as "Hispanic" but the meanings of Hispanicity, including the perception of what is acceptable in terms of thinking, acting, speaking or being in order to belong within social space. I contend that one's interaction with these issues of identity depend on whether a person is in a majority or minority group within a particular context. If one is in a minority group, such as the Latin@s in romantic relationships with whites in this study, they are likely to experience a higher rate of imposed Hispanicity.

The interaction of race and gender was significant in the experiences of both whites and Latin@s. Women of Mexican descent experienced dichotomous pressures in

their relationship—a two-ness or multiple-ness that had serious implications for their romantic experiences. These dichotomies were not of their choice, but rather resulted from the interactions the women of Mexican descent had with their sense of self and how they were perceived by their white male partners who held hegemonic racial power to define situations and not modify their behavior to accommodate Mexican partners' feelings and expectations about their identities and how they affect the family. Furthermore, men of Mexican descent in this study navigated resistance and imposition in different ways than the women of Mexican descent—the gendered dynamics of their interactions permitted them to vocalize and have a firmer sense of agency and resistance than women of Mexican descent despite belonging to the racially disempowered group. Thus, this chapter examined the intersection of privileged raced and gendered positions as they interact in these intimate spaces to show that imposed Hispanicity and resistance to it functions differently by race and gender.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Taking on the task of examining the racial and ethnic identities of Mexicans and whites in romantic relationships with one another in Texas is a huge project, which by no means is completed. Mexicans, like other Latin@s vary significantly by geography (inclusively within the same state as this research has shown), age, generation of immigration, class, gender, and history, among other factors. Omi and Winant (1986, 1994) theorize that race is an organizing factor in "social relationships that shapes the identity of individual actors at the micro level and shapes all spheres of social life at the macro level" (Bonilla-Silva 1997:466). Thus, if race is considered an organizing factor, how and when Latin@s are racialized shapes how Latin@s identify and how they are perceived by others.

The previous chapters have shown how Mexican and whites in romantic relationships with one another who reside in four locations in Texas (Brazos County, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston) are affected at the micro level in their racial and ethnic self-identification as well as how they perceive one another's identities and how this is informed by macro level, institutional processes and vice versa. Furthermore, these chapters also highlight the ways in which white supremacy and racism are at the forefront of all interactions, whether they occur within the self or with others. In their self-identifying practices, people of Mexican descent constantly negotiate how they identify depending on specific geographical location, in-group and out-group

interactions, and what the labels they adopt mean within those spatial and social

relationships. Additionally, people of Mexican descent must also combat or accept the

impositions of identity in these same spaces, taking into consideration the meaning of

the identities by context. Lastly, white partners had less combative choices on racial and

ethnic self-identification without having to negotiate identity impositions in ways that

support the research of Mary Waters (1990, 1996) in that white ethnics have sufficient

racial power to define their own identities with few impositions or hostile interrogations.

In the next sections I will speak to the conclusions that can be made from the

substantive chapters of analysis. I organize this chapter to first discuss a general

summary of findings, followed by the contributions and implications of this study, and

lastly I discuss future research based off of this project.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this dissertation, I sought to address the question: How are Mexicans in

romantic relationships with whites, racialized through their own self-identification and

through the imposition of racial identities by their partners? I also sought to answer

questions on how these identities were affected by navigating intimate space, gender and

class. Answering these questions lead to both theoretical and empirical analysis that

include developing the ideas of *ethnodetachment* and *imposed Hispanicity*. I established

ethnodetachment as a concept rooted in Gans' (1989) symbolic ethnicity to better

encompass the developments of white ethnic identity as moving beyond symbolic

ethnicity to a total absorption into racial and ethnic whiteness. I developed *imposed*

Hispanicity to connote the imposition of identity. *Imposed Hispanicity* maintains that aspects of one's identity, specifically racial and ethnic identities, are socially imposed and functions as a racially coercive tactic that creates social distance between "Hispanics" and whites as a means of retaining white supremacy. Most importantly, in this case, this coercive *imposed Hispanicity* occurs in what is generally considered the most loving and benign space, a romantic relationship.

Empirically, I sought to answer my primary research questions through individual, open-ended, semi-structured interviews with Mexican-white couples in four key locations in Texas. I interviewed a total of 100 people (50 couples) for a total of 90 interviews (10 couples were interviewed together because of time constraints of preference) over the course of two years (2009-2010 and 2012-2013). I focused primarily on the experiences of the partners of Mexican descent but was surprised to find an immense amount of data on white ethnic identity formation. I collected and analyzed the data using grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss (1987) and later Kathy Charmaz (2006). This allowed respondents and the data they provided to speak for themselves and through observation of developing themes make conclusions based on that data without imposing specific ideas or hypotheses about expected outcomes. Thus, I coded the data, allowing the categories, themes and sub-themes to emerge.

I approached the study of identity in two micro-structural ways as they relate to a larger macro-structure of the racial hierarchy. First, as individual self-identification practices among people of Mexican descent and those of European (non-Spanish or

Portuguese) descent (generally referred to as white for the purposes of this study) in romantic relationships with one another; and, second, as interactive negotiations of self-identification and perceived identities among couples. Overall, the findings of this study revealed three major themes which I will summarize below: First, that racial self-identification among people of Mexican descent, regardless of their romantic involvement with whites, is highly complex; second, that whites are experiencing a shift in their ethnic identities that moves beyond symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979) into what I have labeled *ethnodetachment*; lastly, that some whites in romantic relationships with people of Mexican descent imposed "Hispanic" on their partners despite these identifying outside of "Hispanic". Below I highlight findings from these three themes.

Mexican Racial Self-Identification

Since the everyday experiences of people of Mexican descent inform and shape their perceptions of themselves and other racial groups, an analysis of self-identification practices can provide useful information regarding the current structure and nature of race and race relations in the U.S. Their race, ethnicity, and geographical location of residence have constructed people of Mexican descent as "Hispanic" and positions them in a liminal and precarious socio-racial location. Responses from participants of Mexican descent showed that with regard to racial and ethnic self-identification practices, identities were: (a) fluid, dynamic and often amorphous—identities changed depending on in-group and out-group interactions as well as geographic location; (b) "Hispanic" is often chosen through a process of elimination based on feelings of lack of

fit in the already existing racial categories; (c) the meaning of "Hispanic" is often used to polarize people of Latin American descent into "good" and "bad" categories that serve the purpose of being both inclusionary (being part of the good or "exceptional" group of people from a race) and exclusionary (creating social distance between being the "exceptional" people and those who are perceived as "bad" or "immoral"); and, (d) resistance against labels such as "Hispanic" and "Latin@" which are viewed as negative, "Americanized" or inadequate representations of the Latin American experience in the U.S.

While it is clear in self-identification practices among people of Mexican descent that the racial structure that organizes different racial groups can be confining, individuals are still able to make decisions about their identities and enact different forms of agency. While the majority of participants did indeed identify as "Hispanic," others preferred to identify by their area of national origin or their cultural background, providing empirical evidence that racial identity among people of Mexican descent is highly complex, embedded in sociohistorical processes (Omi and Winant 1986, 1994) including those related to racialization and the retention of white supremacy. That is, that identities like "Hispanic" and "Latin@" are macro level imposed identities that operate as social distancing tools used to determine who is and is not "acceptable" as not only a romantic partner but as a group with which to socially interact. Additionally, the adoption of "Hispanic" among participants does not indicate assimilation but rather functions as a social and racial strategy to gain access to resources through an understanding of the inclusionary and exclusionary practices associated with "Hispanic"

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among whites. Another theme was the process of identifying as "Hispanic" as a process of elimination in which participants said that the existing racial categories of white, black, Asian, Native American and Middle Eastern are not representative of how they view themselves racially and ethnically so the adoption of "Hispanic" as both a racial and ethnic identity is a reflection of the macro level racial project of racial and ethnic identification as it operates through formal and informal institutions and social mechanisms. Lastly, a significant number of participants actively resisted the label "Hispanic" and opted for national origin labels such as Mexican or Mexican American, labels they found to be better representations of their experiences in the U.S. as both immigrants and dually colonized subjects.

"Ethnodetachment" and Racial Literacy among White Partners

Mary Waters' (1990, 1996) work on optional ethnicities discusses the ways in which whites have the option of picking and choosing among their various ancestries, ultimately deciding which, if any, they should actively claim and under what circumstances. Claiming an ethnic identity among whites, especially an identity that is "acceptable" (the now popular Italian or Irish versus the unpopular Scottish or Scot-Irish) lets whites feel like they are special and interesting, especially when whites are often portrayed as not having a culture. The data from this research, shows that increasingly, shows that racial whites whom used to identify by a specific ethnicity are no longer opting for specific ethnicities but rather are adopting "white" as an ethnicity. My analysis of this data argued that adopting "white" as an ethnicity functions as a way

of retaining whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege. I conclude that whiteness as ethnicity functions to promote colorblind and post-racial ideologies, and thus *ethnodetachment*, defined as the adoption of "white" as an ethnic identity that moves beyond previous ideas of symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979) to a complete detachment from any ethnic identities or characteristics, allows whiteness to become increasingly more pervasive and permeated in both racial and ethnic identities among whites as well as in the racial hierarchy. Furthermore, "white" ethnicity is a racialized discursive tactic used among participants that helped them feel good about themselves (and in their perceptions appear as non-racial and non-ethnic) while making racialized comments about others under the guise of colorblindness.

Additionally, when discussing white identities I also found a significance in the ways in which white partners develop or do not develop racial literacy through their experiences in interracial partnerships and families, as well as some of the more racially enlightening experiences that make then more racially aware not just to how race operates in pervasive, systemic ways in the U.S., but how this directly affects them, their partner and their families. The sense of self-reflection about their "possessive investment in whiteness" (Lipstiz 1998) and their own positionality in participating and reproducing the racial hierarchy is an important one to examine and analyze in terms of its complexity and under what conditions it emerges or is utilized.

Lastly, both practices of adopting whiteness as ethnicity and the development of racial literacy or racial awareness are not in fact actions done for the benefit of the partner of color—instead, they serve to make the white partner feel better about

themselves, promoting the idea that they are not racist and are in fact colorblind. That is not to say that developing racial literacy is not beneficial to whites as parents to multiracial children. Indeed, learning to decode racialized language and behaviors is beneficial for white parnters of multiracials to conceptually understand the hardships their children will endure. However, adopting anti-racist or racially progressive attitudes and beliefs with the purpose of combating the oppression of people of color and white supremacy were non-existent among participants. Feeling racially aware or like there was a moment of racial clarity ultimately was a self-serving function among whites that reinscribes whiteness, white supremacy, oppression and the "possessive investment of whiteness" (Lipsitz 1998).

"Imposed Hispanicity"

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/2012) coined the phrase "double consciousness" to describe the tension that many African Americans felt in American society suggesting that many African Americans had to remember cultural behaviors and norms from two cultures – their own and the mainstream white culture—acting differently in each culture and understanding the perceptions others would have of them in both cultures. This same "double consciousness" is applicable to people of Latin American descent who also occupy particular spaces in a racial hierarchy that positions whites at the top and people of color in lower rungs (Latin@s have the possibility of occupying the "honorary white" (Bonilla-Silva 2002) or "off-white" (Gómez 2007) positions as well as the "collective black" (Bonilla-Silva 2002)) and who must consider mores and norms from

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both their culture and that of hegemonic whiteness. Over a hundred years since Du Bois' (1903/2012) conceptualization of "double consciousness", this struggle persists, as people of Latin American descent navigate the lines between their own cultural background and the culture of whites.

For the purposes of this study, the struggle is even greater as people of Mexican descent navigate these lines between their own culture and that of their white partners. Unfortunately, according to the findings of this study of *imposed Hispanicity*, the cultural backgrounds and preferred racial and ethnic identifiers of partners of Mexican descent are less valued as if these identities or behaviors surrounding racial identity were lower on the racial hierarchy relative to whites' perceptions of identity among people of Mexican descent. Instead, whites use their racial power through coercive measures to impose "Hispanic" on their partners and in doing so retaining white supremacy. Furthermore, this particular practice operated differently by gender among whites. White men were more likely to impose "Hispanic" on their partners and to do so with more force and authority to define that particular situation. Contrastingly, although white women also imposed "Hispanic" onto their partners of Mexican descent, they did so at a lower rate than their male counterparts. In addition, the verbal tactics used in operating *imposed Hispanicity* were conducted using highly gendered practices that include being perceived as more submissive and less forceful and coercive. To employ these tactics means accepting white supremacy by creating social distance between "Hispanics" (inclusively creating distance between "Hispanics" and "Mexicans") and whites; employing racially dominating and oppressive tactics against people of color;

and, consciously making choices about other people's identities based on what appear to be "personal" and "individual" preferences that in reality are based on macro level, institutional and structural factors including the racial hierarchy and racialization and stereotyping.

CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

One of the major shortcomings of earlier research on interracial/interethnic romantic relationships was the failure to take into consideration Latin@s in these couplings and the navigation of self-identification and external identification practices, including how identity politics function in intimate, romantic spaces. Past research has mostly focused on psychological and sociological reasons and barriers to interracial romantic relationships between whites and blacks (Hill and Thomas 2000; Lewis, Yancey and Bletzer 1997; St. Jean 1998; Foeman and Nance 1999) and Asians and whites (Sung 1990; Mok 19999; Qian and Lichter 2000) but fail to discuss the implications and power dynamics of interracial/interethnic relationships as they relate to a racially stratified society as that of the U.S. Furthermore, the gamut of racial classification available to Latin@s that lacks consideration for understandings of race in Latin America as well as self-perceptions of race among Latin@s (e.g., viewing themselves as neither black nor white, but their own racial classification) is rarely taken into consideration in scholarship or governmental mass data collection (e.g., the U.S. Census). Moreover, the scholarly body of literature on racial and ethnic identification lacks a discussion of how imposed identity, primarily "Hispanic", operates and how it is

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a function of white supremacy and the racial structure that positions whites at the top, blacks at the bottom and everyone else either in what Bonilla-Silva (2002) calls the "collective black" or an "honorary white" category (also referred to as "off-white" by Laura Gómez (2007)).

Another important way to reevaluate theories of racial self-identification, particularly as they relate to Latin@s in the U.S., is to use their actual lived experiences and preferred racial identification labels. Studies on Latin@s self-identification (Oboler 1995; Sáenz and Aguirre 1990) show that self-identification among Latin@s is highly complex and varies by social context. The formal mechanisms that in part measure race and ethnicity as they relate to other factors (socioeconomic status, marital status, and other demographic information) have not included measures to count the Hispanic/Latin@ population until the 2000 Census when the questions of Spanish/ Hispanic/Latino ancestry was introduced as a measure of ethnicity. However, it has not been until recently that reports from the Pew Research Center (López and Krogstad 2014; López 2013a; 2013b) and U.S. Census Bureau (Ríos, Romero and Ramírez 2014) have shown that indeed people of Latin American descent vary in their responses to questions about racial self-identification. Few reports and articles (including the aforementioned) have discussed these preferences and even less have discussed the fluidity of racial and ethnic identity among Latin@s (see Sáenz and Aguirre 1990 for more information on the effect of social context on ethnic identification among people of Mexican descent) and much less in the context of intimate, romantic space. However, the data presented in this dissertation begins to fill that gap with a particular focus on

how a history of dual colonialism and area of residence, in particular different cities across Texas, affect racial and ethnic identities. Furthermore, because Latin@s are the actual individuals who have to undergo these processes of racialization and incorporation, they provide the best information on what these processes entail and what consequences result from them. The process of Latin@ racialization shapes their perceptions of themselves and other Latin@s (e.g., the distinction between good and bad) as well as how they are perceived by others, including their romantic partners, and this is an invaluable source of information on how Latin@s acrtually come to be incorporated (or not incorporated) into the mainstream.

Thus, the contribution of this dissertation are two-fold: First, it makes a contribution to research on intergroup relations in three ways – it examines racial and ethnic self-identification practices among Latin@s; the ethnic identification of whites, more specifically what I have called *ethnodetachment* (the adoption of "white" as an ethnic category that moves away from symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979) and creates even further social distance between white ethnics and non-white ethnics as a way of reifying white supremacy; and, the ways in which imposed identities, namely *imposed Hispanicity*, operates to sustain white supremacy, reinscribe people of Latin American descent into rungs of the racial hierarchy that are lower than whites who are at the top, and creates coercive intimate spaces. Additionally, the scholarly contributions from data presented in this project (as well as the data not discussed) extend to broader areas of the social sciences including Latin@ history, family studies, race and ethnicity, gender, immigration, and the intersectionality of race, class, gender and sexuality. Second, it

contributes to policy changes specifically how demographic measurements of race are conceptualized and executed (including the legacy of centuries of problematic racial categorization such as limiting racial categories to a handful of labels).

FUTURE RESEARCH

With the purpose of gaining a better understanding of how self-identification, *ethnodetachment*, and *imposed Hispanicity* operate throughout Texas, my future research plans include conducting more interviews with heterosexual, Mexican-white couples in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Rio Grande Valley, and El Paso areas. Furthermore, I would also like to extend this project to other states to gain a better understanding of these identificational complexities. In particular, I am interested in gathering data by different regions (e.g., other states in the southwest, west coast, Midwest, south, southeast, and northeast), with a particular interest in how these identities vary in these given the different histories, time of American colonization/immigration, and choice of destinations of migration. Additionally, I would also like to extend this research to include same-sex couples as well as intergroup (people of Mexican descent in romantic relationships with African Americans, Asians, Native Americans, and Middle Easterners) and intragroup (romantic relationships among people of different Latin@ groups) relationships.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF RESEARCH - OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE AND BIOSAFETY

1186 TAMU, General Services Complex
College Station, TX 77843-1186
750 Agronomy Road, #3501

979.458.1467
FAX 979.862.3176
http://researchcompliance.tamu.edu

Human Subjects Protection Program

Institutional Review Board

APPROVAL DATE: 25-Apr-2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: GATSON, SARAH N

FROM: Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT:	Initial Review
Protocol Number:	2012-0217
Title:	Racial and Ethnic Identities among Mexican-White Couples
Review Category:	Expedited
Approval Period:	25-Apr-2012 **To** 24-Apr-2013

Approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:

Eligible for Expedite Approval (45 CFR 46.110): Identification of the subjects or their responses (or the remaining procedures involving identification of subjects or their responses) will NOT reasonably place them at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the their financial standing,

employability, insurability, reputation, or be stigmatizing, unless reasonable and appropriate protections will be implemented so that risks related to invasion of privacy and breach of confidentiality are no greater than minimal.

Criteria for Approval has been met (45 CFR 46.111) - The criteria for approval listed in 45 CFR 46.111 have been met (or if previously met, have not changed).

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(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

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(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies.

(Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b) (3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Provisions:

Comments:

This research project has been approved. As principal investigator, you assume the following responsibilities

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed each year in order to continue with the research project. A Continuing Review along with required documents must be submitted 45 days before the end of the approval period. Failure to do so may result in processing delays and/or non-renewal.
2. **Completion Report:** Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Completion Report must be submitted to the IRB Office.
3. **Adverse Events:** Adverse events must be reported to the IRB Office immediately.
4. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment to the IRB Office for review. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
5. **Informed Consent:** Information must be presented to enable persons to voluntarily decide whether or not to participate in the research project unless otherwise waived as noted above.

This electronic document provides notification of the review results by the Institutional Review Board.

TEXAS A&M
U N I V E R S I T Y

Human Subjects Protection Program   Institutional Review Board

REVIEW DATE: 11-Oct-2012

APPROVAL DATE: 22-Oct-2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sarah Gatson
               Jennifer Guillen

FROM: Office of Research Compliance
               Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: Amendment

Protocol Number:	2012-0217
Title:	Racial and Ethnic Identities Among Mexican-White Couples
Review Category:	Expedited
Approval Period:	22-Oct-2012 **To** 24-Apr-2013

Approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:

Modification Eligible for Expedite Review (45 CFR 46.110): The modification(s) do not affect the design of the research AND the modification(s) add no more than minimal risk to subjects.

Criteria for Approval has been met (45 CFR 46.111) - The criteria for approval listed in 45 CFR 46.111 have been met (or if previously met, have not changed).
----
(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies.

(Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b) (3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Provisions:

Comments:	Addition of research locations: all counties in Houston (Harris, Fort Bent, and Montgomery), Dallas-Ft Work Metroplex (Collin, Dallas, Delta, Denton, Ellis, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Palo Pinto, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, and Wise) and Austin (Travis, Williamson, and Hays) Increase enrollment from 20 couples to 40 couples (80 participants)

This research project has been approved. As principal investigator, you assume the following responsibilities

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed each year in order to continue with the research project. A Continuing Review along with required documents must be submitted 45 days before the end of the approval period. Failure to do so may result in processing delays and/or non-renewal.
2. **Completion Report:** Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Completion Report must be submitted to the IRB Office.
3. **Adverse Events:** Adverse events must be reported to the IRB Office immediately.
4. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment to the IRB Office for review. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
5. **Informed Consent:** Information must be presented to enable persons to voluntarily decide whether or not to participate in the research project unless otherwise waived as noted above.

This electronic document provides notification of the review results by the Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

[DATE]

[ORGANIZATION'S NAME]
[ORGANIZATION'S ADDRESS]

Dear _____:

This letter is a request for [name of organization]'s assistance with a project I am conducting as part of my doctoral degree in the Department of Sociology at Texas A&M University, College Station, under the supervision of Dr. Sarah N. Gatson. The title of my research project is, "Racial and ethnic identities among Mexican-White couples." I would like to provide you with more information about this project that explores the racial and ethnic identities of interracial, Mexican-White, couples living in select Texas counties.

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which Mexican-White couples navigate their individual identities and their partner's identity in key locations in Texas. Specifically, I aim to examine how individuals in these couplings perceive themselves and how they perceive their partners. Knowledge and information generated from this study may help other researchers better understand the intricacies of interracial/interethnic relationships.

It is my hope to connect with couples or families who are engaged in the programs of the [insert name of organization] to invite them to participate in this research project. I believe that the participants and families of your program have unique understandings and stories relating to Mexican and White identities. During the course of this study, I will be conducting interviews with both individuals in the couple to gather their stories about their identity. At the end of the study the publication of this dissertation will share the knowledge from this study with other race/ethnicity, family and marriage, and Latino/a researchers.

To respect the privacy and rights of the [name of organization] and its participants, I will not be contacting the families or couples directly. What I intend to do, is provide the [name of organization] with information flyers to be distributed by the [name of organization] at their discretion. Contact information for myself and advisor will be contained on the flyers or packages. If a couple is interested in participating they will be invited to contact me, Jennifer Guillén, to discuss participation in this study in further detail.

Participation of any couple is completely voluntary. Each couple will make their own independent decision as to whether or not they would like to be involved. All participants will be informed and reminded of their rights to participate or withdraw before any interview, or at any time in the study. Participants will receive an information letter including detailed information about this study, as well as informed consent forms.

To support the findings of this study, quotations and excerpts from the stories will be used labeled with pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. Names of participants will not appear in the dissertation of reports resulting from this study. Participants will not be identifiable, and only described by gender and as a couple.

If the [name of organization] wishes the identity of the organization to remain confidential, a pseudonym will be given to the organization. All paper field notes will be collected and will be retained locked in my office and in a secure cabinet. All audio recordings will be destroyed upon transcription and paper notes and transcriptions will be confidentially destroyed after 7 years. Finally, only myself and my advisor, Dr. Sarah N. Gatson in the name of the Department of Sociology at Texas A&M University will have access to these materials. There are no known or anticipated risks to participate in this study.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Human Subjects Protection Program, Texas A&M University. However, the final decision about participation belongs to the [name or organization], and the couples. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please feel free to contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at Texas A&M University at irb@tamu.edu or at (979) 458-4067.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (619) 565-9539 or by email jcguillen@tamu.edu. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Sarah N. Gatson, at (979) 845-5133 or by email at gatson@tamu.edu.

I hope that the results of my study will be beneficial to the [name of organization], to your members, and to the communities you serve across Bexar County, Texas, as well as the broader research community, I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance with this project.

Attached are copies of my recruitment materials for distribution at your own discretion.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Guillén
Ph.D Candidate
Department of Sociology
Texas A&M University

Sarah N. Gatson
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
Texas A&M University

SUBJECTS NEEDED FOR STUDY ON MEXICAN-WHITE COUPLES IN BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

Please share with organization members, employees, family, and friends!

I am a graduate student at Texas A&M University conducting a study focused on Mexican-White couples and their racial and/or ethnic identities. This project explores the ways in which identity is constructed throughout time and across different contexts and situations. I am looking for participants in Bexar County, Texas. Participation is for couples (Mexican-White; this can include any White ethnic group and individuals who are of Mexican descent but who identify as Mexican American, Tejano/a, Hispanic, Latino/a or White); married or in a relationship (relationship of at least 3 years); 18 years or older; and, who have lived in Bexar County for at least 12 months.

The interviews will last approximately 1-2 hours, and the identity of the subjects will be kept confidential. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Boards for Texas A&M University.

To participate or for more information please see the attached information sheet and/or contact:
Jennifer Guillén: jcguillen@tamu.edu **or (619) 565-9539 (cell phone) or (979) 693-5274 (home).**

Thank you!
Jennifer Guillén

EN BUSCA DE PARTICIPANTES PARA UN ESTUDIO DE PAREJAS MEXICANAS-BLANCAS EN BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

¡Favor de compartir con miembros de su organización, empleados, familiares y amigos!

Soy una estudiante de doctorado en Texas A&M University y estoy llevando a cabo un estudio enfocado en las parejas Mexicanas-Blancas y sus identidades raciales y/o étnicas. Este proyecto explora las maneras en que la identidad se construye a través del tiempo y en diferentes contextos y situaciones. Estoy buscando participantes en el condado de Bexar en Texas. Para este proyecto solicito la ayuda de parejas Mexicanas-Blancas (esto puede incluir cualquier grupo étnico blanco e individuos que son de descendencia Mexicana o se identifican como Mexicanos Americanos, Tejanos, Hispanos, Latinos o Blancos); estas parejas deben estar casadas o en una relación amorosa con un mínimo de 3 años juntos; ser adultos mayores de 18 años; y, viviendo en el condado de Bexar por un mínimo de 12 meses consecutivos.

Las entrevistas duraran aproximadamente 1-2 horas y la identidad de los participantes se protegerá con confidencialidad. Este proyecto ha sido aprobado por el Human Subjects Review Boards de Texas A&M University.

Para participar o para más informes favor de ver la siguiente página con información mas detallada y/o contactar a la investigadora:
Jennifer Guillén: jcguillen@tamu.edu **o al (619) 565-9539 (cellular) o al (979) 693-5274 (casa)**

¡Gracias!
Jennifer Guillén

PARTICIPANTS* NEEDED FOR STUDY ON MEXICAN-WHITE COUPLES IN TEXAS!

I am a graduate student at Texas A&M University conducting a study focused on Mexican-White couples and their racial and/or ethnic identities. This project explores the ways in which racial/ethnic identity is constructed throughout time and across different contexts and situations. !

The interviews will last approximately 1-2 hours, and the identity of the subjects will be kept confidential. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Boards for Texas A&M University. !

For more information or to participate in this study please contact the researcher directly at the contact information provided. !

*Participants will be compensated $20.00/couple for their

participation upon the interviewing of both individuals in the couple.!

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION:!

COUPLES:!
Mexican-White couples! Married or in relationships (relationships of at least 3 years)!

RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY!
One partner must be White (any White ethnic group) and the other must be Mexican (or of Mexican descent including those who might identify as Mexican, Mexican American, Tejanos/as, Hispanic, Latino/a, or White)!

AGE!
18 years or older!

LOCATION!
Living in one of the following Texas cities: Houston, Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex, Austin, and San Antonio for at least 12 consecutive months!

CONTACT INFORMATION

RESEARCHER: Jennifer Guillén, Ph.D Candidate, Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX!
E-MAIL: jcguillen@tamu.edu!
TELEPHONE NUMBERS: 619-565-9539 or 979-693-5274!
PHYSICAL ADDRESS: 311 Academic Building, College Station, TX 77840-4351!

ADVISOR: Sarah N. Gatson, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX!
E-MAIL: gatson@tamu.edu!
TELEPHONE: 979-845-5133

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Version date: 9/20/2012!

BUSCO PARTICIPANTES* PARA UN ESTUDIO DE PAREJAS MEXICANAS-BLANCAS EN TEXAS!

Soy una estudiante de doctorado en Texas A&M University y estoy llevando a cabo un estudio enfocado en las parejas Mexicanas-Blancas y sus identidades raciales y/o étnicas. Este proyecto explora las maneras en que la identidad se construye a través del tiempo y en diferentes contextos y situaciones.

Las entrevistas duraran aproximadamente 1-2 horas y la identidad de los participantes se protegerá con confidencialidad. Este proyecto ha sido aprobado por el Human Subjects Review Boards de Texas A&M University.

Para más informes o para participar en el estudio, favor de contactar directamente a la investigadora.

*Las parejas serán compensadas con $20.00/pareja por su participación en este estudio (el pago se efectuará después de entrevistar a los dos individuos de la pareja).

REQUISITOS PARA PARTICIPAR EN EL ESTUDIO!

PAREJAS!
Parejas Mexicanas-Blancas casadas o novios (los novios deben de llevar un mínimo de 3 años juntos)!

IDENTIDAD RACIAL/ÉTNICA!
En la pareja, uno de los individuos debe ser Blanco/a (de cualquier grupo étnico) y el otro debe ser Mexicano/a (o de descendencia Mexicana incluyendo aquellas personas que se identifican como Mexicano/a, Mexicano/a-Americano/a, Tejano/a, Hispano/a, Latino/a, o Blanco/a)!

EDAD!
Mayores de 18 años!

LOCALIDAD!
La pareja debe de haber vivido en las siguientes ciudades en Texas, por un mínimo de 12 meses consecutivos: Houston, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Austin, y San Antonio!

Versión: 20 de septiembre del 2012

CONTACTO

INVESTIGADORA: Jennifer Guillén, estudiante de doctorado, Facultad de Sociología, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX!
CORRE ELECTRÓNICO: ! jcguillen@tamu.edu!
TELÉFONOS: ! 619-565-9539; ! 979-693-5274!
DIRECCIÓN: 311 Academic Building, College Station, TX 77840-4351!

SUPERVISORA: Dra. Sarah N. Gatson, Profesora, Facultad de Sociología, Texas A&M University!
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO: gatson@tamu.edu!
TELÉFONO: (979) 845-5133!

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (ENGLISH)

Date and time of interview: _____

Before I start, let me tell you a few things about this interview. I am conducting this interview as a graduate student at Texas A&M University. I am interested in finding out more information about the racial and/or ethnic identities of individuals in interracial, Mexican-White, relationships in Bexar County. You were chosen for this interview because you fit the criteria for this research (18 years or older; in a relationship (of at least 3 years) or marriage between individuals who are Mexican (individuals must be Mexican or of Mexican descent, but do not have to necessarily identify as such) and White (any White ethnic group); and have resided in Bexar County for at least 1 year (12 months). I will interview each person separately for approximately 60 to 180 minutes. To thank you for your participation, each couple will receive $20.00 in cash for participating.

The information you provide is confidential. Nobody outside of this research project will know your name, your personal identifying characteristics, or know about any of your responses. Please do not be afraid to be honest or to answer the questions. If you would rather not answer a question, that is also okay. Just let me know and we will proceed to the next question. Finally, it would help me if I could record our session so that I don't lose or omit any information you may give. If you would rather not be recorded, let me know and I will not record the interview.

If you do not have any immediate questions now, then I would like to have you read over this informed consent form, which further details your rights and protections as a participant in this research. When you are done reading, if you have no other questions and are comfortable serving as a participant for this research, please sign the consent form indicating your willingness to participate.

Unless you have any questions, let's begin.

FAMILY & UPBRINGING
- Ancestry/background
- Family history
- Family activities
- Family friends and childhood friends
- Holiday celebrations, traditions, religious festivities
- Language
- Media, food, religion
- Race – how did you learn about race, ethnicity, ancestry, history, and/or different people?
  - Memorable experiences
  - Discrimination
  - Discussions of race/ethnicity
  - Racial identity – How do you identify racially? Ethnically?
    - Childhood?
    - Adulthood?

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

- How did you meet your partner? How old were you? What was the attraction?
- Race/ethnicity of past romantic partners
- Family reactions to past relationships and current partner
- What activities or hobbies do you and your partner participate/engage in?
- Religion?
- Wedding, if applicable
- Language
- Racial identity – how would you identify your partner racially? Ethnically? Why?
  - How does your partner identify racially and/or ethnically? Why?

GENDER

- Latinas
- Latinos
- White women
- White men
- Household role
- Gender and relationship

SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Friendship groups growing up

- Friendship groups before relationship
- Friendship groups during relationship
- Family friends now
    - Race and/or ethnicity
    - Gender
    - How you met
    - Professions
    - Discussion topics

RACE, RACISM, AND DISCRIMINATION

- Experiences with different racial and/or ethnic groups
- Experiences with prejudice and discrimination of any sort
- Experiences with racism by yourself
- Experiences with racism with your parents
- Experiences with racism with your partner
    - If applicable, experiences with racism with your children

CHILDREN

- Racial and/or ethnic identity
    - Why?
- Children's friendship groups
- Reaction to children from other family members (parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents, etc)?
- Children's school (racial composition, class composition, gender composition)
- Children's activities (after school or weekend)?

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

1. Age: _____
2. Sex: ____ Male ____ Female
3. City and State of Birth (or Country):

    _____

4. What would you estimate to be your annual income (i.e., what you contribute as an individual to the household income? If you do not feel comfortable having this value audio recorded, please choose one of the following options provided on the note card.

5. What would you estimate your annual household income (i.e., what is the total income from all individuals of the household who work)? If you are not comfortable having this value audio recorded, please choose one of the options provided on the note card.

    _____

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    a. Less than high school
    b. High school
    c. Associate Degree
    d. Bachelor Degree
    e. Master Degree
    f. Doctoral or other professional degree
    g. Other, please specify

        _____

7. What is the highest level of education you expect to complete?
    a. Less than high school
    b. High school
    c. Associate Degree
    d. Bachelor Degree
    e. Master Degree
    f. Doctoral or other professional degree
    g. Other, please specify

        _____

8. What is your current occupation? _____

    _____

9. What is your race? _____

10. What is your ethnicity? _____

11. What is your mother's race? _____

12. What is your mother's ethnicity? _____

13. What is your father's race? _____

14. What is your father's ethnicity? _____

15. What is the highest level of education your mother has completed? _____

_____

_____

16. What is the highest level of education your father has completed? _____

_____

_____

17. What occupations has your mother held? _____

_____

_____

_____

18. What occupations has your father held? _____

_____

_____

_____

19. OTHER

- Any other information you would like to share with the researcher?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (SPANISH)

Fecha y hora de entrevista: _____

Antes de empezar, déjeme decirle unas cuantas cosas acerca de esta entrevista. Estoy llevando a cabo esta entrevista como parte de mis estudios de doctorado en Texas A&M University. Estoy interesada en encontrar más información sobre las identidades étnicas y raciales de los individuos en relaciones amorosos entre Mexicanos y Blancos viviendo en el condado de Bexar en Texas. Usted fue elegido/a para esta entrevista ya que concuerda con los criterios establecidos para esta investigación (mayor de 18 años; esta en una relación amorosa (mínimo de 3 años) o matrimonio entre individuos que son Mexicanos (individuos pueden ser Mexicanos o de descendencia Mexicana, pero se pueden identificar de varias maneras incluyendo: Mexicano/a; Mexicano/a-Americano/a; Tejano/a; Hispano/a; Latino/a; o, Blanco/a) y Blancos (de cualquier grupo étnico Blanco); ha vivido en el condado de Bexar por un mínimo de 1 año (12 meses consecutivos). Entrevistaré a cada individuo de la pareja individualmente en una sesión de 60 a 180 minutos. Para agradecerle por su participación, cada pareja recibirá $20.00 en efectivo como compensación y agradecimiento.

Toda la información que me proporcionará se mantendrá confidencialmente. Nadie afuera de este proyecto sabrá su nombre, sus características personales, o sabrá acerca de su participación o de sus respuestas. Por favor no tenga miedo de ser honesto/a o de responder a las preguntas. Si no quiere contestar alguna pregunta, nada mas dígame y seguiremos adelante. Finalmente, sería una gran ayuda si me podría dar permiso para grabar el audio de nuestra entrevista. De esta manera podré reducir el riesgo de perder u omitir información. Si prefiere que no grabe el audio de la información, hágame saber y con gusto apagaré la grabadora.

Si no tiene preguntas en este momento, me gustaría que usted lea la siguiente información acerca del consentimiento informado. Está información detalla sus derechos y protecciones al participante en este proyecto de investigación. Cuando acabe de leer ésta información, si no tiene alguna pregunta, y se siente cómodo/a como participante para este estudio, favor de firmar la forma indicando que ésta participando en este estudio por su propia voluntad.

Si no tiene preguntas, empecemos.

<u>FAMILIA Y CRIANZA</u>
- Antepasados/antecedentes
- Historia familiar
- Actividades familiares
- Amigos de familia y de infancia
- Celebraciones de días festivos, religiosos, tradiciones, etc
- Lenguaje
- Medios de comunicación (televisión, música, películas, etc), comida, religión
- Raza – ¿Cómo aprendió acerca de la raza, etnicidad, linaje, historia, o acerca de los diferentes grupos mundiales?
  - Experiencias memorables
  - Discriminación
  - Discusiones de raza/etnicidad
  - Identidad racial – ¿Cómo se ha identificado usted en cuanto a raza? ¿Etnicidad?
    - Infancia
    - Adolescencia
    - Adulto/a

<u>RELACIONES ROMÁNTICAS/AMOROSAS</u>
- ¿Cómo conoció a su pareja? ¿Qué edad tenía? ¿Cuál fue la atracción inicial que tuvo hacia su pareja?
- Raza/etnicidad de ex parejas
- Reacciones de sus familiares hacia su pareja actual
- ¿Qué actividades o pasatiempos comparte con su pareja? ¿Cuáles no comparten?
- Religión
- Boda (si se aplica)
- Lenguaje
- Identidad racial/étnica -- ¿Cómo identificaría a su pareja en cuanto a raza? ¿Etnicidad? ¿Por qué?
  - ¿Cómo se identifica su pareja en cuanto a raza? ¿Etnicidad? ¿Por qué?

<u>GÉNERO</u>
- Latinas
- Latinos
- Mujeres Blancas
- Hombres Blancos
- Función doméstica
- Género y su relación con su pareja

<u>REDES SOCIALES</u>
- Amigos en la infancia

- Amigos antes de su relación/matrimonio con su pareja
- Amigos durante su relación/matrimonio con su pareja
- Amigos familiares de hoy
  - Raza y/o etnicidad
  - Género
  - ¿Cómo se conocieron?
  - Nivel de intimidad con la persona
  - Profesión
  - Temas de conversación

RAZA, RACISMO, Y DISCRIMINACIÓN
- Experiencias con diferentes grupos raciales/étnicos (antes de la relación/matrimonio)
- Experiencias con diferentes grupos raciales/étnicos (después de la relación/matrimonio)
- Experiencias con prejuicios o discriminación (de cualquier tipo)
- Experiencias con el racismo (solo/a)
- Experiencias con el racismo (con sus papás u otros familiares presentes; o, por parte de ellos)
- Experiencias con el racismo (con su pareja; o, por parte de su pareja)
  - Si tiene hijos, ¿ha tenido alguna experiencia con racismo o discriminación de algún tipo?

HIJOS
- Identidad racial y/o étnica
  - ¿Por qué?
- Amigos de sus hijos
  - Raza/etnicidad
  - Género
  - Clase socioeconómica
- ¿Reacción a sus hijos por parte de sus familiares (padres, hermanos/as, tías/tíos, abuelos, etc.)?
- Escuela de sus hijos (raza/etnicidad, clase socioeconómica, género)
- Actividades o pasatiempos de sus hijos

INFORMACIÓN DEMOGRÁFICA
1. Edad: _____
2. Género: _____ Hombre _____ Mujer
3. Ciudad y estado (o país) de nacimiento: _____

_____

4. ¿Qué calcularía usted que es su salario anual individual (lo que usted contribuye como individuo al salario total familiar. Si no se siente cómodo/a dando una figura exacta, favor de escoger una de las opciones dadas en el tarjetón)?

_____

5. ¿Qué calcularía usted que es su salario anual familiar (el salario total de todos los individuos del hogar. Si no se siente cómodo/a dando una figura exacta, favor de escoger una de las opciones dadas en el tarjetón)?

_____

6. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación que ha completado?
   a. Menos de la preparatorio (high school)
   b. Preparatoria (high school)
   c. Associate Degree
   d. Licenciatura (Bachelor's Degree)
   e. Maestría (Master's Degree)
   f. Doctorado u otra educación profesional
   g. Otra, especificar
   _____

7. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación que espera completar?
   a. Menos de la preparatoria (high school)
   b. Preparatoria (high school)
   c. Associate's Degree
   d. Licenciatura (Bachelor's Degree)
   e. Maestría (Master's Degree)
   f. Doctorado u otra educación profesional
   g. Otra, especificar
   _____

8. ¿Cuál es tu ocupación actual? _____

_____

9. ¿Cuál es su raza? _____

10. ¿Cuál es su etnicidad? _____

11. ¿Cuál es la raza de su mamá? _____

12. ¿Cuál es la etnicidad de su mamá? _____

13. ¿Cuál es la raza de su papá? _____

14. ¿Cuál es la etnicidad de su papá? _____

15. ¿Cuál es el nivel educacional más alto que ha completado su mamá? _____

_____

16. ¿Cuál es el nivel educacional más alto que ha completado su papá? _____

_____

17. ¿Cuáles han sido las ocupaciones de sus mamá? _____

_____

_____

_____

18. ¿Cuáles han sido las ocupaciones de su papá? _____

_____

_____

_____

OTRA INFORMACIÓN
- ¿Hay alguna otra información que usted gustaría contribuir a esta investigación?

FAMILIOGRAMS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Legend

Symbol	Description	Symbol	Description	Symbol	Description
□ (red double square)	Hispanic/Latino Interviewee: Male	□ (green double square)	White Interviewee: Male	□ (black square)	Unknown Race Male
○ (red double oval)	Hispanic/Latino Interviewee: Female	○ (green double oval)	White Interviewee: Female	○ (black oval)	Unknown Race Female
□ (red square)	Hispanic/Latino Male	□ (green square)	White Male	□ (purple square)	Biracial Child: Male
○ (red oval)	Hispanic/Latino Female	○ (green oval)	White Female	○ (purple oval)	Biracial Child: Female

m. = married; # of years…
d. = divorced; # of years …
r. = relationship; # of years…

Separated/ Strained

Divorced

⊠ Participant with X through indicates person is deceased

For the purposes of this study, "Latino" and "Latina" will be used to identify individuals of Latin American descent. However, the respondents of this study self-identified in a variety of ways including: Hispanic, Latin@, Mexican, Mexican American, Chican@, and white. The use of "Latino" and "Latina" in these diagrams is used only to visually show a membership in a group or a particular descent and does not necessarily reflect a population homogenous in their identification.

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#1: Nicole and Frank
San Antonio, TX

Franks' Father, Lyle, TX

Franks' Mother, Natalia, TX

Paternal Grandfather, NY

Paternal Grandmother, NY

Oldest, Brother 1

Middle, Brother 2

Youngest, Sister

Youngest Brother*

Nicole's Father, NY

Oldest Brother

Nicole's Mother

Frank, 56 France

Tiffany, 50 Omaha, NE

Nicole, 46 Rochester, NY

Middle Sister, Age Unknown

Older Sister, 58

m. 15

Jeremy, 30
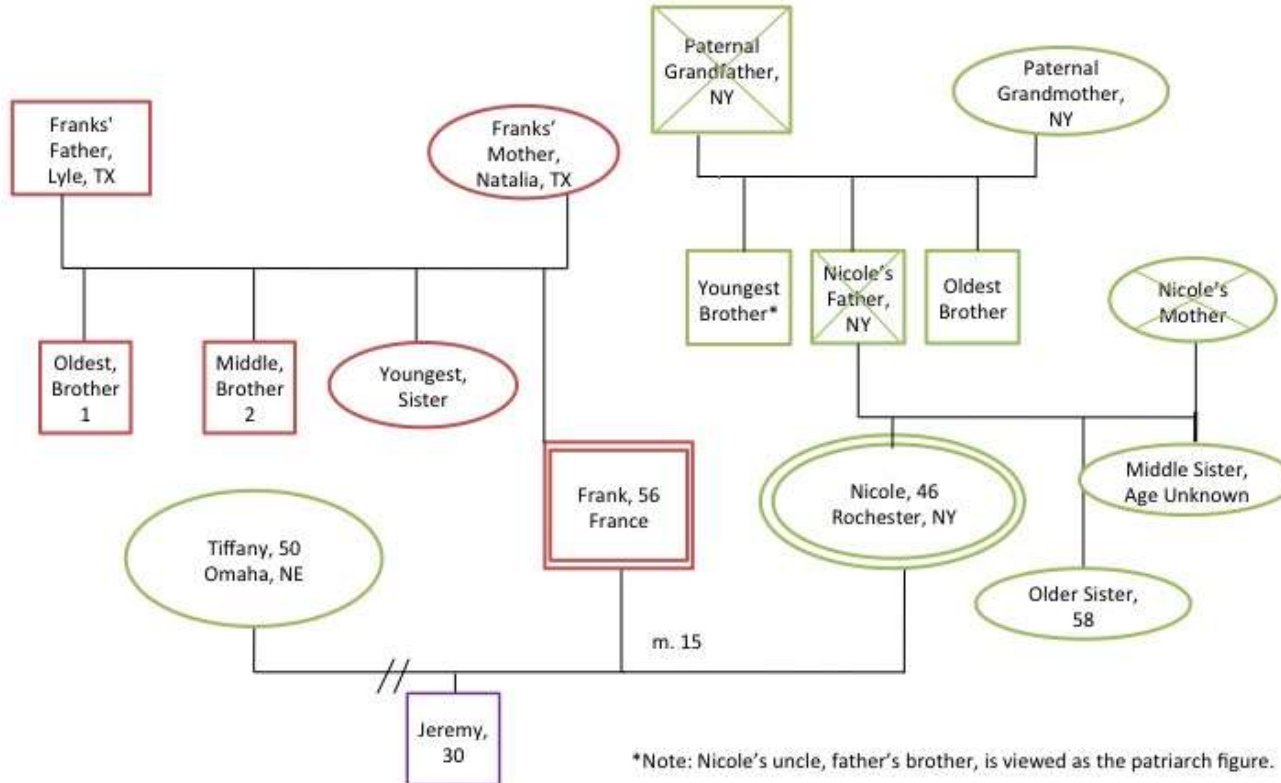
*Note: Nicole's uncle, father's brother, is viewed as the patriarch figure.

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Couple #1

Nicole is a 46-year-old woman born and raised in Rochester, New York. She currently resides in San Antonio, having lived in Texas for approximately 15 years with her husband Frank. She is the youngest of three girls. Her parents divorced and died when she was fairly young, and as a result, was raised by her oldest sister. Nicole was about 8 years old when her oldest sister, who was 21 years old and married at the time, took custody of her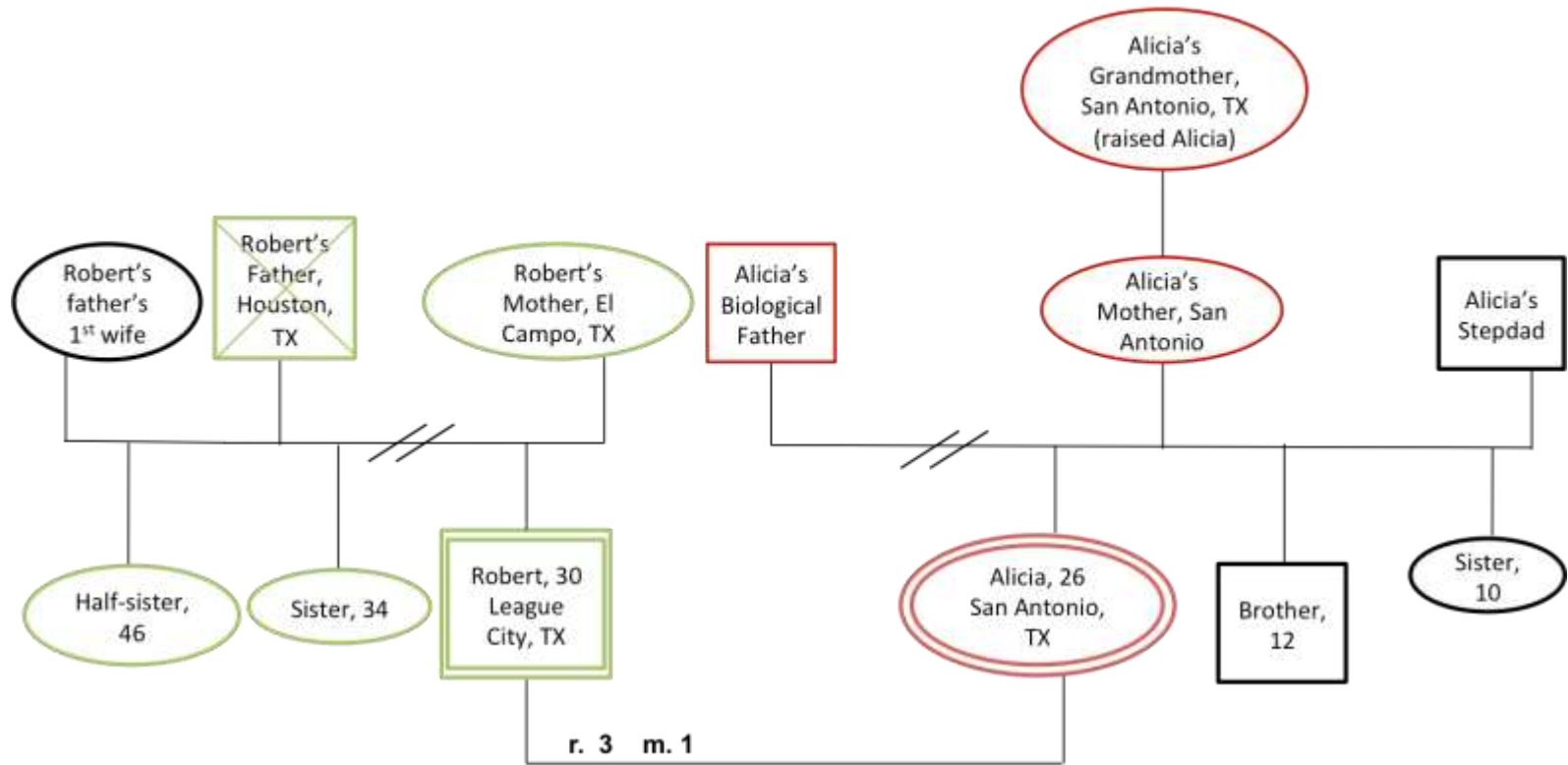. Nicole attended college in Florida and afterwards joined the Air Force, which she is still a part of through the Texas International Guard. She served in the Air Force active duty, later became part of the Air Force Reserve, took a break from military service, and has recently reconnected with the Air Force as a part-time guardsman.

Frank, a 56-year-old man born in Verdun, France. He currently resides in San Antonio, Texas, having lived there for about 15 years with his wife, Nicole. Both of his parents are of Mexican descent and were born in Texas. His father was born in Lytle, Texas and his mother was born in Natalia, Texas. Members of his father's side of the family were migrant workers, while those on his mother's side were stationary workers. His father was in the Air Force. He is the second of four children. He attended high school in Lincoln, Nebraska and later attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. His highest level of education is a Master's degree.

#2: Alicia and Robert
San Antonio, TX

Alicia's Grandmother, San Antonio, TX (raised Alicia)

Robert's father's 1st wife

Robert's Father, Houston, TX

Robert's Mother, El Campo, TX

Alicia's Biological Father

Alicia's Mother, San Antonio

Alicia's Stepdad

Half-sister, 46

Sister, 34

Robert, 30 League City, TX

Alicia, 26 San Antonio, TX

Brother, 12

Sister, 10

r. 3   m. 1

Note: Got married February 2013; Couple relocated to Washington state mid 2014
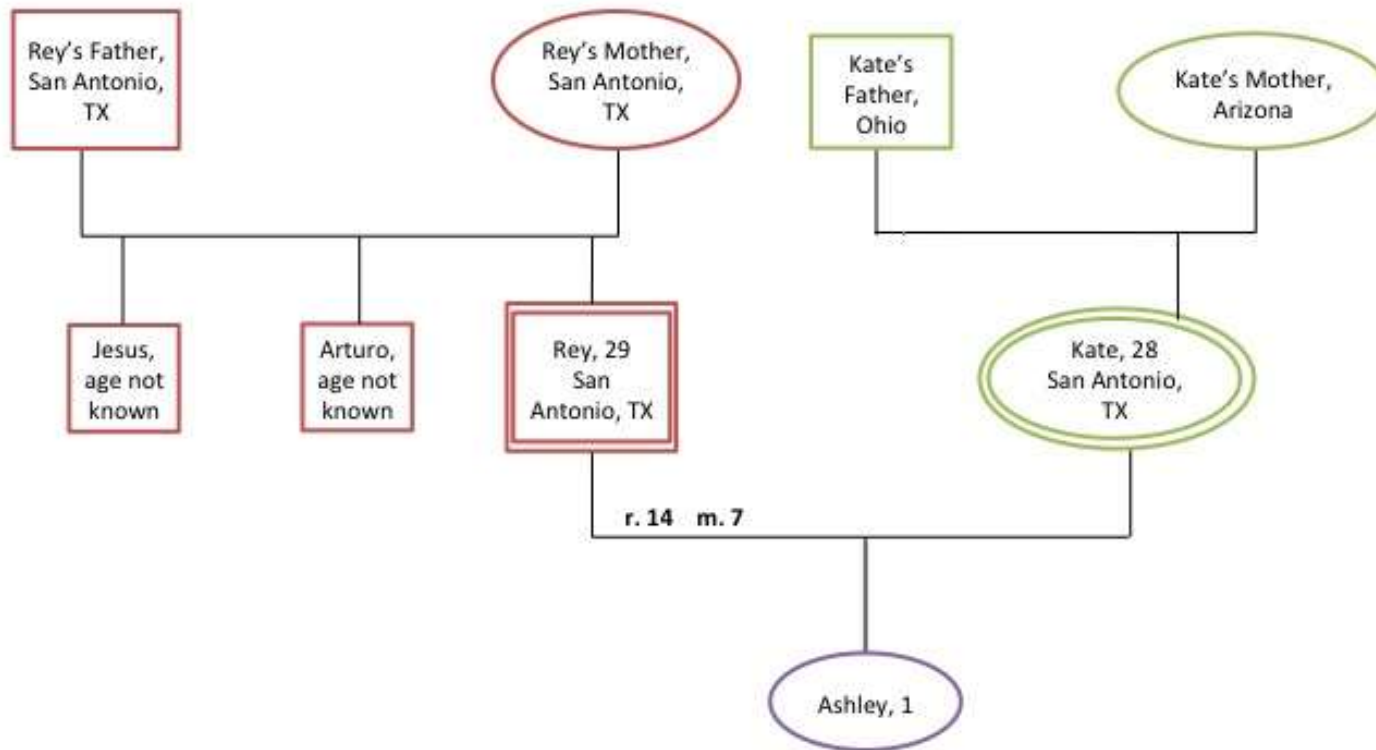
258

Couple #2

Robert is a 30-year-old man born in Webster/League City, Texas. He currently resides in San Antonio, Texas with his now wife (the couple was engaged when they were interviewed), Alicia. Robert's family is of Scottish, Irish, English, and Germanic descent. He has an older sister, and both of them have their undergraduate degrees in History, as well as a half sister from his dad's first marriage. He comes from a very well educated family (his father had a Master's degree in Chemistry or Biology and dropped out of a PhD program; his mother has a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Chemistry, and a Master's and PhD in Counseling Psychology). His parents divorced when he was in first grade, and his father passed away when he was 15 years old. Robert is a Texas A&M University alumnus and has a Bachelor's and Master's degree in History.

Alicia is a 26-year-old woman born in San Antonio, Texas. She currently lives in San Antonio with her now husband, Robert. Alicia's great, great grandmother on her mother's side immigrated to Mexico from Spain. Her family lost all of their money during the Mexican Revolution and as a result, immigrated to what is now Texas. Her mother has a Bachelor's in English and is a teacher, and her dad (step father) has a Bachelor's in History. She has a younger brother and sister, ages 12 and 10, respectively. She attended Texas A&M University and received her Bachelor's degree in Political Science. She is a secretary in a human resources office.

#3: Kate and Rey
San Antonio, TX

- Rey's Father, San Antonio, TX
- Rey's Mother, San Antonio, TX
- Kate's Father, Ohio
- Kate's Mother, Arizona
- Jesus, age not known
- Arturo, age not known
- Rey, 29 San Antonio, TX
- Kate, 28 San Antonio, TX
- r. 14   m. 7
- Ashley, 1

*Note: At the time of interview Kate was pregnant, their child is now close to 1 year in age
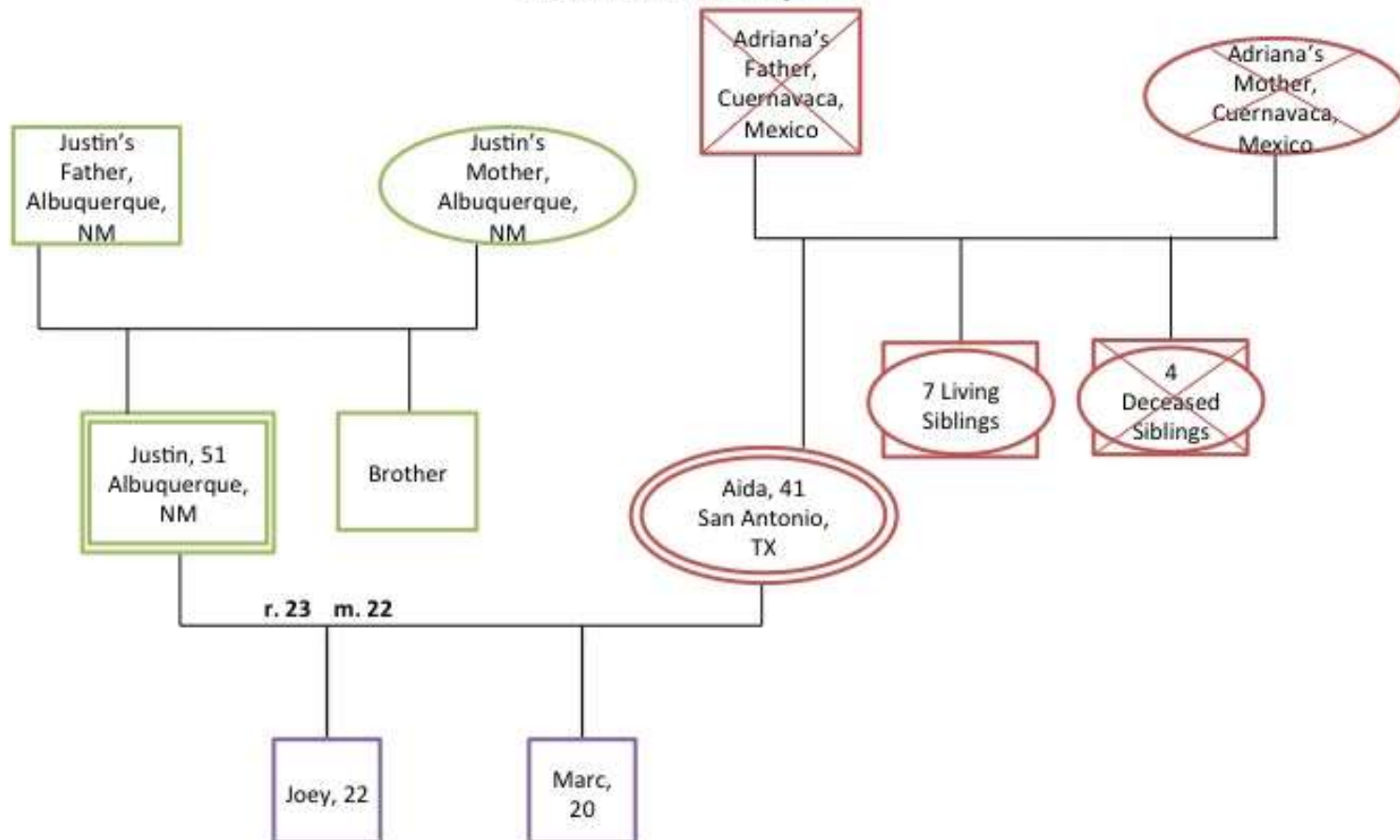
260

Couple #3

Kate is a 28-year-old woman born in San Antonio, Texas. She currently lives in San Antonio. Her mother is originally from Arizona and her father is from Ohio. They have lived in San Antonio most of their lives. Her mother's side of the family is of Swedish descent, and has migrated from Minnesota to Arizona, while her father is of English descent and has migrated because of his pursuit of education, along with her mother. Her father has a degree in engineering, and a bachelor's in mechanical engineering. She is an only child. Her parents live in San Antonio. She comes from a very tight knit family. She lived in Mexico for a period of time. She got her bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of Texas in San Antonio. She is currently expecting her first child and she is a claims adjuster for USAA.

Rey is a 29-year-old male from San Antonio, Texas. His family is also from San Antonio, and they currently live there. He traces his ancestry to the Apaches and the Comanche, and has a book written by his grandfather documenting his ancestry. Both of his parents have high school diplomas, and his father is a restaurant owner while his mother is a housewife. Both of his grandfathers were in the Air Force. Kate and Rey met in high school. Rey also has two brothers. He attended West Point for four years, after finishing school, he and Kate got married and he returned to San Antonio. He has a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and works as an engineer manager at a tortilla factory.

In May 2013, Kate gave birth to their daughter, Ashley.

#4: Aida and Justin
San Antonio, TX

Adriana's Father, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Adriana's Mother, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Justin's Father, Albuquerque, NM

Justin's Mother, Albuquerque, NM

7 Living Siblings

4 Deceased Siblings

Justin, 51 Albuquerque, NM

Brother

Aida, 41 San Antonio, TX

r. 23 m. 22

Joey, 22

Marc, 20

Note: Couple was interviewed together.

Couple #4

Aida is a 41-year-old woman from San Antonio, Texas. She comes from a large family. She has 7 siblings, 4 who have passed away. Her brother, Juan, introduced Justin to her. Her parents have also passed away. Her mother received her high school diploma and her father received a Master's degree. Both of her parents were educators; her mother was a schoolteacher and Sunday school teacher and her father was a principal. She went to Catholic schools in San Antonio and received her bachelor's degree in Bilingual Communications from the University of Incarnate Word. She currently works for her husband's carpeting company as an office manager.

Justin is a 54-year-old man from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Both of his parents have passed away. His mother received her high school diploma and his father attended college. His mother was an office manager and his father owned his own flooring business, which Justin and his brother later inherited. He lived all throughout the Southwest, mostly in New Mexico, but also in Arizona, and in California. He has a bachelor's degree and owns his own carpeting company. Justin has one brother, who also owns his own company. Justin was previously married.

Aida and Justin have two children, Joey and Marc. Joey attends St. Mary's University and Marc attends UTSA.

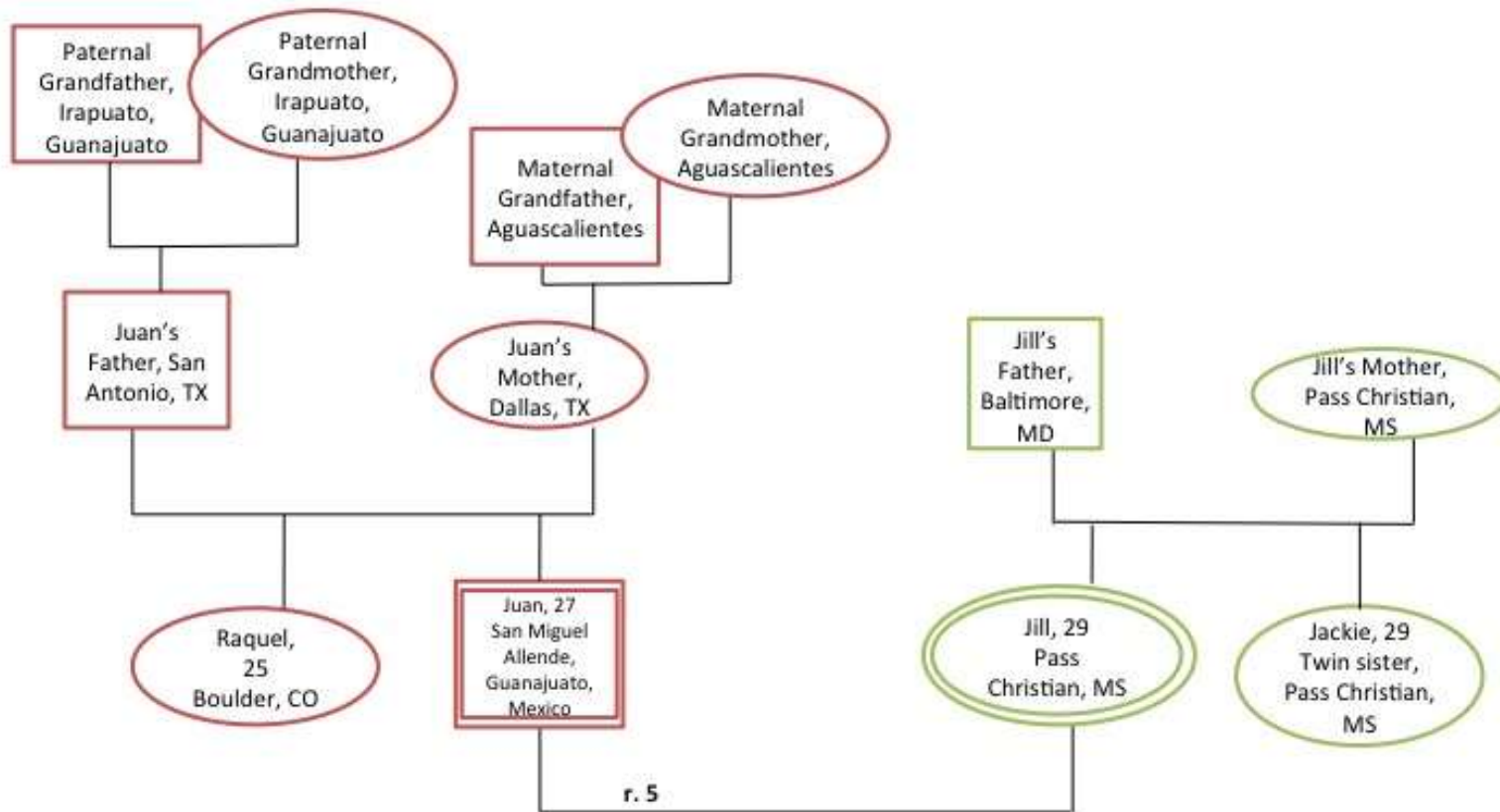# #5: Ana María and Corey
San Antonio, TX

Couple #5
Corey is 43-year-old man born in Schertz, Texas. He currently lives in San Antonio, Texas. His family is of both German and English descent. His grandfather was in the Air Force, and he permanently moved to Texas before the 1950s. His father was also in the Air Force and he found a permanent job in San Antonio when Corey was 10 years old. Corey established a very close relationship with his mother. Both of his parents completed high school; his mother was a stay at home mom and his father is a retired Air Force and does some work as a contractor for construction. Corey completed high school and works as a construction foreman. He has a younger sister; there is a 10-11 year difference between them. He has a son, Donald, from a previous marriage. Donald is 20 years old and attends Texas A&M University - San Antonio. He also adopted his wife's daughter, Marta, from her previous marriage.

Ana María is a 40-year-old woman born in Waco, Texas. She lives with her husband, Corey, in San Antonio, Texas. Her grandparents from both sides of her family are from San Luis Potosí, Mexico and came to the United States because they were migrant farm workers. Her parents were both born in the United States. She has 3 siblings, two brothers and one sister. Ana María completed high school and works as an administrative assistant. Both of her parents completed high school. Her mother was a teacher and her father is a retired Air Force mechanic, post-retirement he is a mechanic. She has a daughter, Marta, from a previous marriage. Marta is a dental hygienist. Ana María's ex-husband is not a part of her daughter's life, and her current husband, Corey, legally adopted her daughter.

#6: Jill and Juan
San Antonio, TX

Paternal Grandfather, Irapuato, Guanajuato

Paternal Grandmother, Irapuato, Guanajuato

Maternal Grandfather, Aguascalientes

Maternal Grandmother, Aguascalientes

Juan's Father, San Antonio, TX

Juan's Mother, Dallas, TX

Jill's Father, Baltimore, MD

Jill's Mother, Pass Christian, MS

Raquel, 25 Boulder, CO

Juan, 27 San Miguel Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico

Jill, 29 Pass Christian, MS

Jackie, 29 Twin sister, Pass Christian, MS

r. 5

Note: Jill moved to Austin to live with her twin sister. Her and Juan are still together.

266

Couple #6

Jill is a 29-year-old woman from Pass Christian, Mississippi. She currently lives in Austin, Texas. She moved to Columbia, South Carolina when she was about 7 years old, and in her early 20s, moved to San Antonio, Texas. Jill has a twin sister, Sarah, who also moved with her to Austin. Both Jill and Sarah were homeschooled and only attended public school for 2-3 years during the time they lived in South Carolina with their father. Jill traces her ancestry from her mother's side to Native American, specifically either Choctaw or Biloxi based on a painting that was in her parent's home. Her mother was also from Pass Christian, Mississippi, and her father was born in Baltimore, Maryland. Her mother was placed in foster care when her grandparents died, and was eventually adopted by another family. Bother her parents have bachelor's degrees; her mother owns a bed and breakfast and her father is a bank manager. She has an associate's degree and is a barista. She used to be a drug addict, but has been sober for 4 years. She enrolled at Narcotics Anonymous after being in a severe car accident due to her being under the influence of heroin. She met her boyfriend, Juan, at Narcotics Anonymous.

Juan is a 27-year-old man born in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico. He lives in San Antonio, Texas. Both of his parents were born in the United States; his mother was born and raised in the Dallas/Fort Worth area and his father was born in San Antonio. Both of his parents have Master's degrees; his mother is a birthing doula and his father is a Chief Financial officer of an international bank. His grandfather from his mother's side was a business owner in Mexico from Aguascalientes and his grandfather from his father's side was a lawyer for major political figures in Mexico. His grandfather eventually had to seek political refuge in the United States because it became too dangerous for his family to live in Mexico (Irapuato, Guanajuato). Juan has lived in Guanajuato, Mexico City, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and the United States. He has a sister named Raquel, two years younger than him. Juan used to be a drug addict, but is now sober. He met his partner, Jill, at Narcotics Anonymous. He is currently enrolled in school and is working on his bachelor's degree.

#7: Marla and Domingo
San Antonio, TX
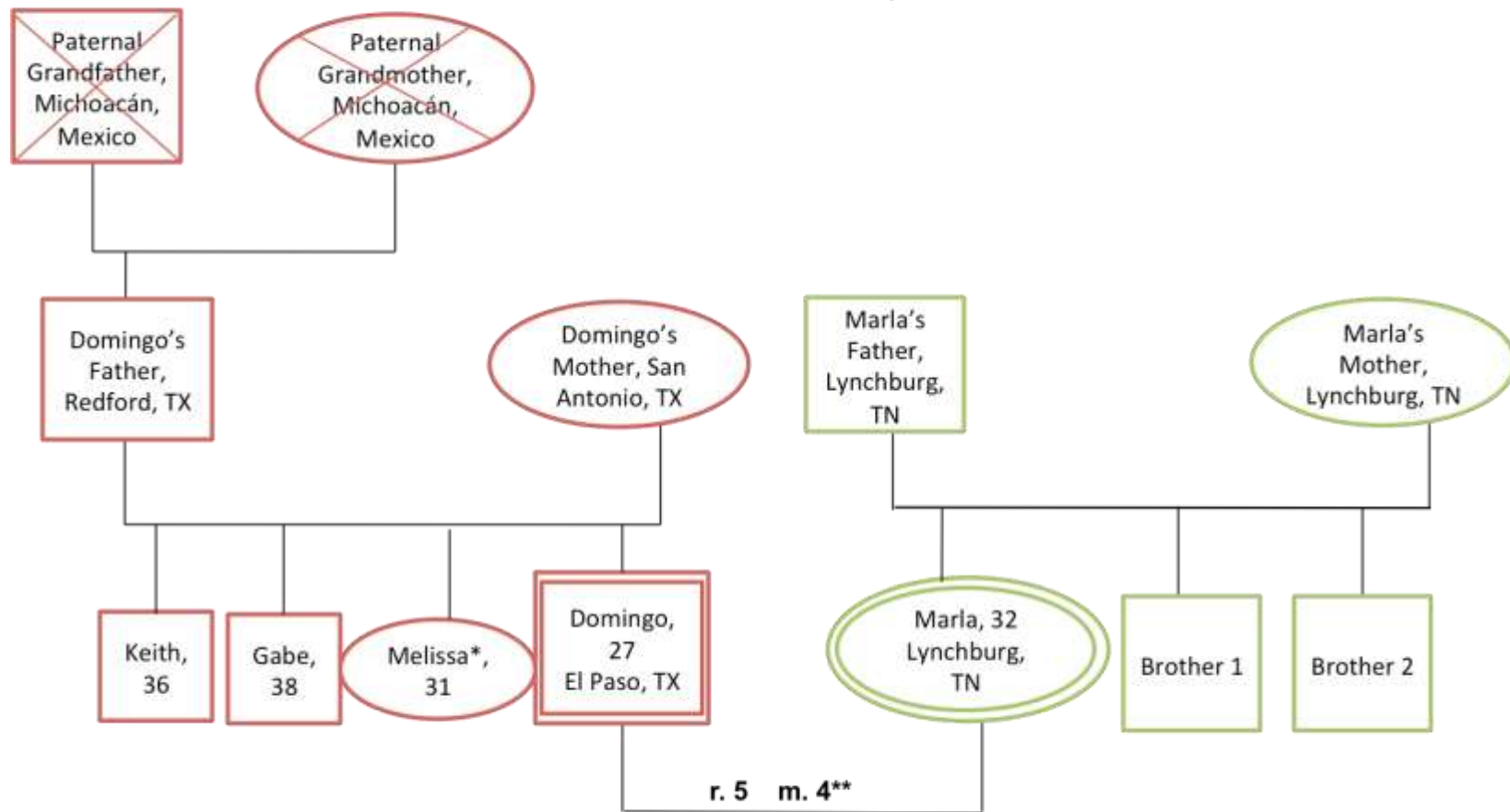
*Melissa (Couple #22) was also interviewed for this dissertation project
** As of June 2014, Domingo and Marla welcomed their first daughter into their lives

Couple #7

Marla is a 32-year-old woman born in Lynchburg, Tennessee. She grew up in Tullahoma, Tennessee with her parents and two brothers. Both of her brothers and her father work for the Jack Daniels distillery. Marla is a barista. Her mother worked for the Jack Daniels distillery but then began working as an administrative assistant for one of the deans of Motlow State Community College in Lynchburg. Both of her parents completed high school. Marla has been living in San Antonio, Texas for two years. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa in Advertising and Communications. After graduating, she moved to Enterprise, Alabama to open a bar with a friend, and eventually met Domingo there. She is also a painter and hopes to showcase some of her work in art galleries. She had a miscarriage, but plans for children in the future.

Domingo is a 27-year-old man born in El Paso, Texas. He resides in San Antonio. He comes from an immigrant family from Michoacán, Mexico. His grandfather from his father's side participated in the Bracero Program during WWII. Domingo's father also worked on the fields, picking garlic and onion with his father and siblings in Redford, Texas. Domingo has 13 aunts and uncles from his father's side. Domingo's mother is from San Antonio, and so is her family. Domingo's father was in the Navy for 4 years, then moved on to Border Patrol, and finally Federal Law Enforcement training. He lived in a variety of places due to his father's job. Domingo has completed high school and hopes to get a bachelor's degree. He recently started working for Border Patrol. Both of his parents have bachelor's degrees. His mother is a real estate agent and his father is retired from the U.S. Department of Security and now owns his own business training law enforcement on how to deal with immigration and border security. Domingo has two older brothers, Gabe and Keith, and an older sister, Melissa, whom he developed a close relationship with due to proximity in age. He also has a heart condition.

#8: Sandra and Alan
San Antonio, TX

Alan's Father, Bay Area, CA

Alan's Mother, Bay Area, CA

Sandra's Father, Ciudad Rio Bravo, Mexico

Sandra's Mother, Ciudad Rio Bravo, Mexico

Brother, 36

Sister, 33

Alan, 35 San Francisco, CA

Sandra, 32 Reynosa, Mexico

Josuelo, Oldest

Mari, Middle

r. 3

Note: He finished his PhD and is preparing for a PostDoc abroad while Sandra finished her PhD.

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Couple #8

Alan is a 35-year-old man born in San Francisco, California. He lives in San Antonio, Texas. He has a master's degree, and is currently working on his PhD in mechanical engineering. His mother has a bachelor's degree and is a fitness instructor/gym owner, and his father has a master's degree and is a musician with his own band based in San Francisco. He has an older brother who is an executive chef and restaurateur, and a younger sister who is attending SFSU, majoring in psychology. His family is very involved with music. Alan and his brother play the guitar, his brother also plays the electric bass, his sister plays the piano, and his mother sings. His father's side is of English descent and they migrated to the United States around the 1850s. His mother's side of the family is of French descent and they migrated to the United States around the 1800s. His grandparents from both sides of his family were also born in the United States.

Sandra is a 32-year-old woman born in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, México. She currently lives in San Antonio, Texas. Her parents are from Ciudad Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas, México. Her father finished high school and her mother finished middle school. She has an older brother and sister, who were also born in México. Her siblings are married; her sister lives in Austin and has three children, and her brother lives in Houston and has one child. She has a closer relationship with her sister than with her brother. Her father had a work visa and was a field worker, and after her brother was born, they moved to McAllen due to her father's employment. Her mother returned to Reynosa, Tamaulipas when she became pregnant with her sister. Her parents were granted residency with the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, and eventually they all became citizens. Her father now works for the sheriff's office. Sandra is a graduate student working on her PhD in applied statistics. She was previously married, but had her marriage annulled. She maintains a friendship with her ex-husband, who is gay.

#9: Sarah and Andrés
San Antonio, TX
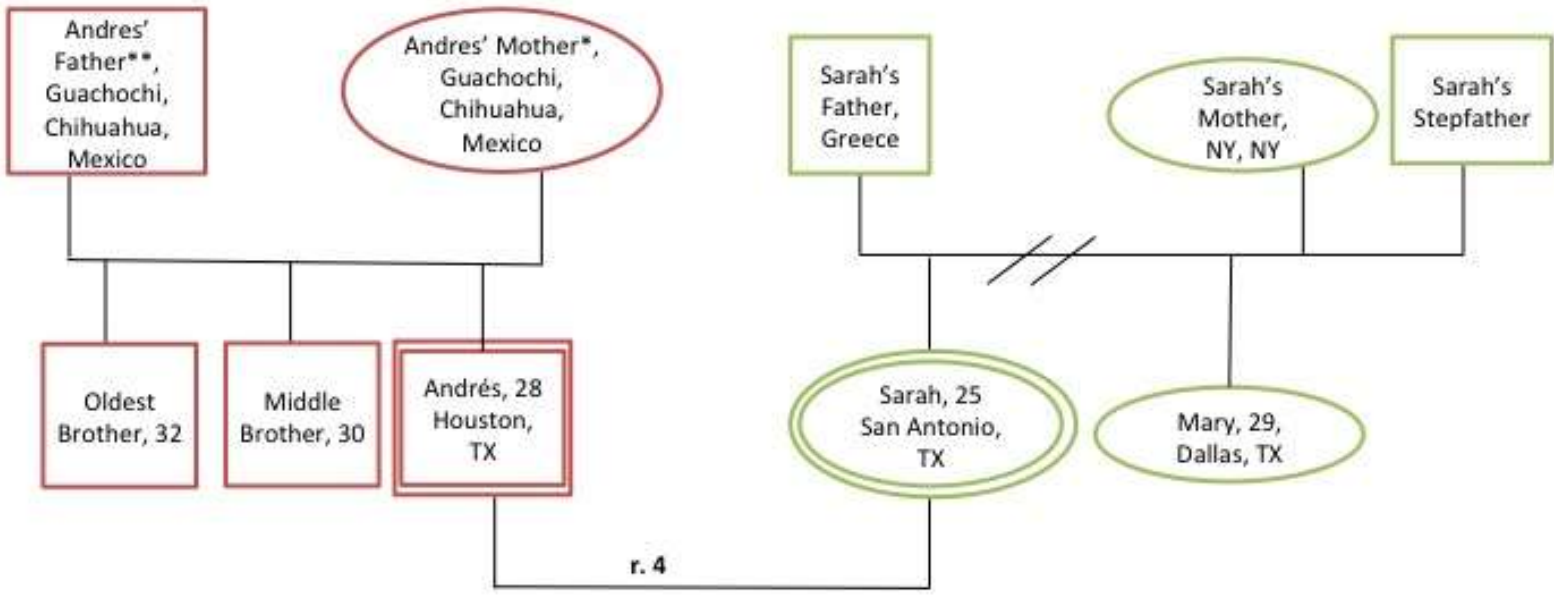
* Note: Andres' mother is Rarámuri (Tarahumara), an indigenous group in northern Mexico
** Note: Andres' father is *not* Rarámuri, he is mestizo (indigenous-Spanish) and because of this their relationship between family members is generally tense

272

Couple #9

Sarah is a 25-year-old woman born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. Her father was born in Greece, and his family migrated to the United States when he was five years old. His parents died when he was young and he was put into foster care. Her mother is from New York, but she moved to San Antonio in pursuit of her education. Her mother has a doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from Texas A&M and her father completed high school. Her mother is a veterinarian and her father is currently unemployed. Sarah has an associate's degree in communication and is an insurance agent. Her parents divorced when she was 6 years old and her mother remarried two years later, but her parents remain on good terms. Sarah has an older sister, Mary, who is 4 years older than her. She works as an advertisement executive in Dallas.

Andrés is a 28-year-old man born in Guachochi, Chihuahua, Mexico. He lives in San Antonio with his partner, Sarah. He completed high school and is a tattoo artist. His mother and father were part of two different Mexican cultural groups; his mother is Rarámuri and his father is a mestizo (Mexican, does not identify as indigenous). His father migrated to the United States with a tourist visa in order to do agricultural labor in Texas. He eventually brought his family with him to Houston with the help of the 1986 amnesty. His father now works in the roofing industry. His mother works in a restaurant as a cook. His eldest brother works for a Mexican product distributor handling accounts and has two children with two different women, and his second oldest brother is a waiter at the restaurant their mother works at. Andrés lived in Houston, but moved to San Antonio because he was not able to find a job as a tattoo artist in Houston or Austin.

#10: Gabriela and Andrew
San Antonio, TX
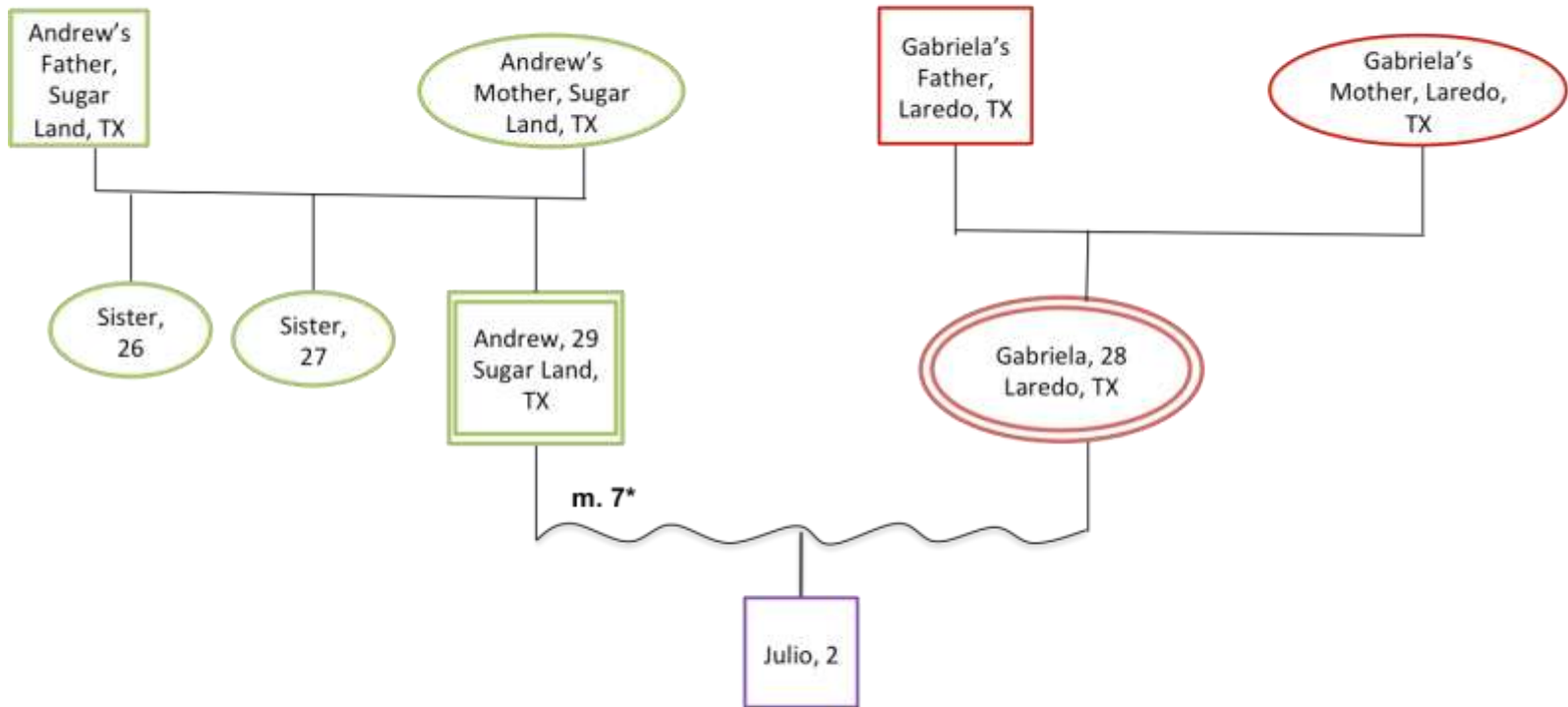
Note: Couple was interviewed together.
*As of 2013, this couple has divorced. Andrew remains in San Antonio and Gabriela has returned to Laredo to be closer to family so they can help with her son while she works
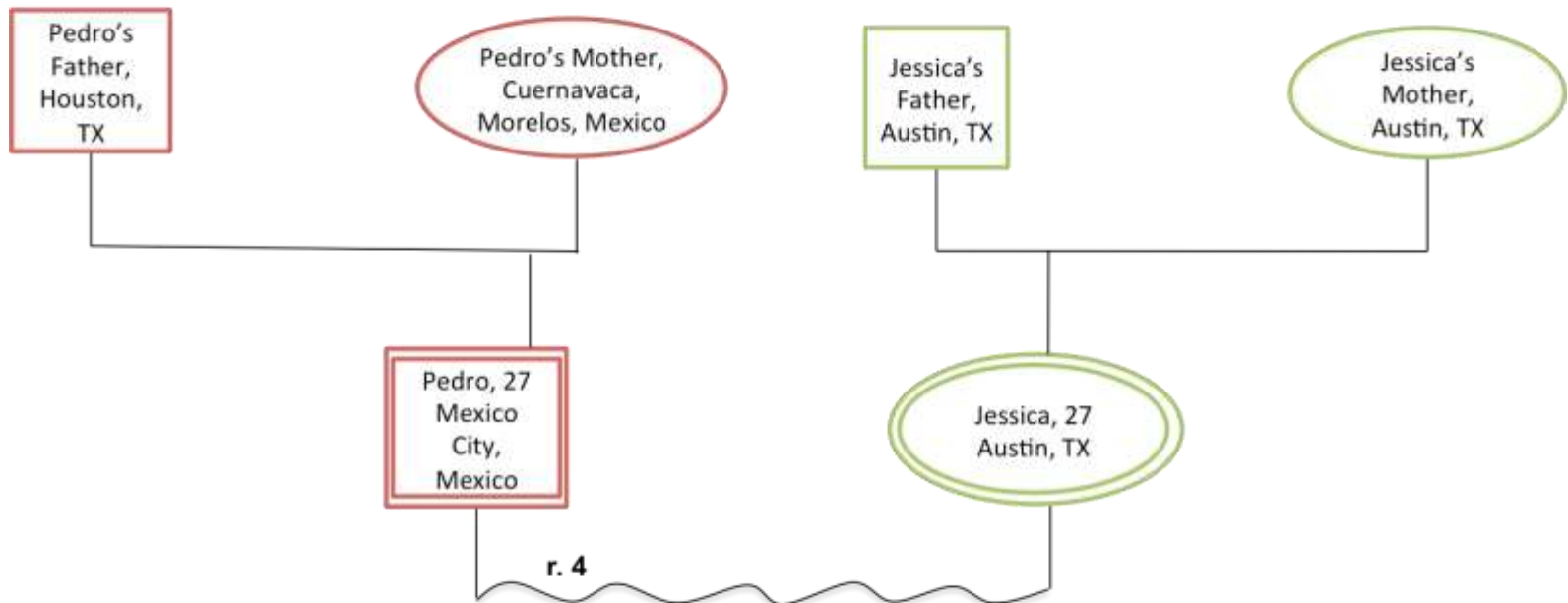
Couple #10

Andrew is a 36-year-old man from Sugar Land, Texas. He lives in San Antonio, Texas. His family is of Irish descent. His father is a doctor and his mother is a nurse. He has two younger sisters, whom he does not have strong relationships with. They are all Texas A&M University graduates. He has a master's degree in computer science and is a web developer and programmer. Both his parents have bachelor's degrees.

Gabriela is a 32-year-old woman from Laredo, Texas. She lives in San Antonio, Texas. Her family is from the Laredo and Nuevo Laredo area. She is an only child. She also graduated from Texas A&M University with a Bachelor's degree in Communications and is considering going back to school for a master's degree. She works in Human Resources. Both her parents completed high school. Her mother is a homemaker and her father is a business owner (imports). She is a salient Catholic and was heavily involved in the Aggie Catholic Church during her time at Texas A&M.

They have a two-year old son, Julio, from their relationship. They are currently in the process of getting a divorce.

#11: Jessica and Pedro
Austin, TX

Pedro's Father, Houston, TX

Pedro's Mother, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico

Jessica's Father, Austin, TX

Jessica's Mother, Austin, TX

Pedro, 27 Mexico City, Mexico

Jessica, 27 Austin, TX

r. 4

Note: This couple has since broken up, as Jessica relapsed and went back to rehab. Broke-up in the interest of her sobriety. Friends with 6B and 7B

Couple #11

Jessica is a 27-year-old woman born in and currently residing in Austin, Texas. She has a bachelor's degree and works at her father's athletic wear store as part of the sales team. Her parents are also from Austin, Texas. Her grandparents on her father's side are from San Antonio, TX and are of German descent. Her grandparents on her mother's side are from Des Moines, Iowa and Chicago, Illinois, and are both of Polish descent. Her grandfather on her mother's side was also a business owner. Her parents have bachelor's degrees from the University of Texas. Her mother has worked as a housewife, secretary, administrative assistant, and billing assistant. Her father owns his own business. She is an only child. She is a recovering heroin addict, but has now been sober for two years. She moved to Houston with her partner, Pedro, in order for both of them to sober up. She is now back in Austin living with her parents.

Pedro is a 27-year-old male from Mexico City, Mexico, who currently lives in Austin, Texas. His mother is from Cuernavaca, Morelos and his father is from Houston, Texas. His father's family is originally from Dallas, Texas but they moved to Houston when his father was very young. Pedro has moved back and forth between Mexico and the United States, moving to Texas permanently when he was 16 years old. He has a bachelor's degree and works as a tech support representative for a gaming company and is also a freelance journalist. His mother has a bachelor's degree and is an art dealer, and his father has a master's degree and is a journalist. Pedro's father had bone marrow cancer (leukemia). He is a former drug addict (heroin) but decided to seek sobriety when his father was diagnosed with cancer. He moved to Houston with Jessica, his partner, in order to sober up. He has moved back to Austin and lives with three other people.

#12: Sonia and Charlie
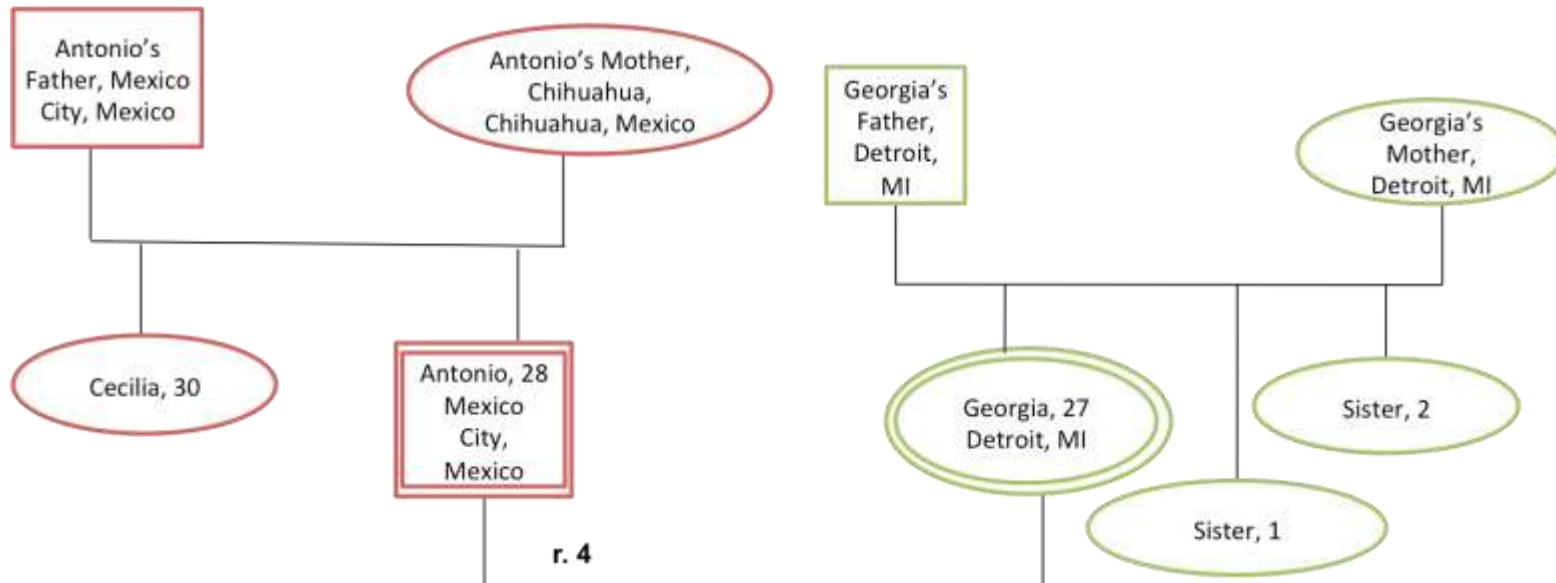## Austin, TX
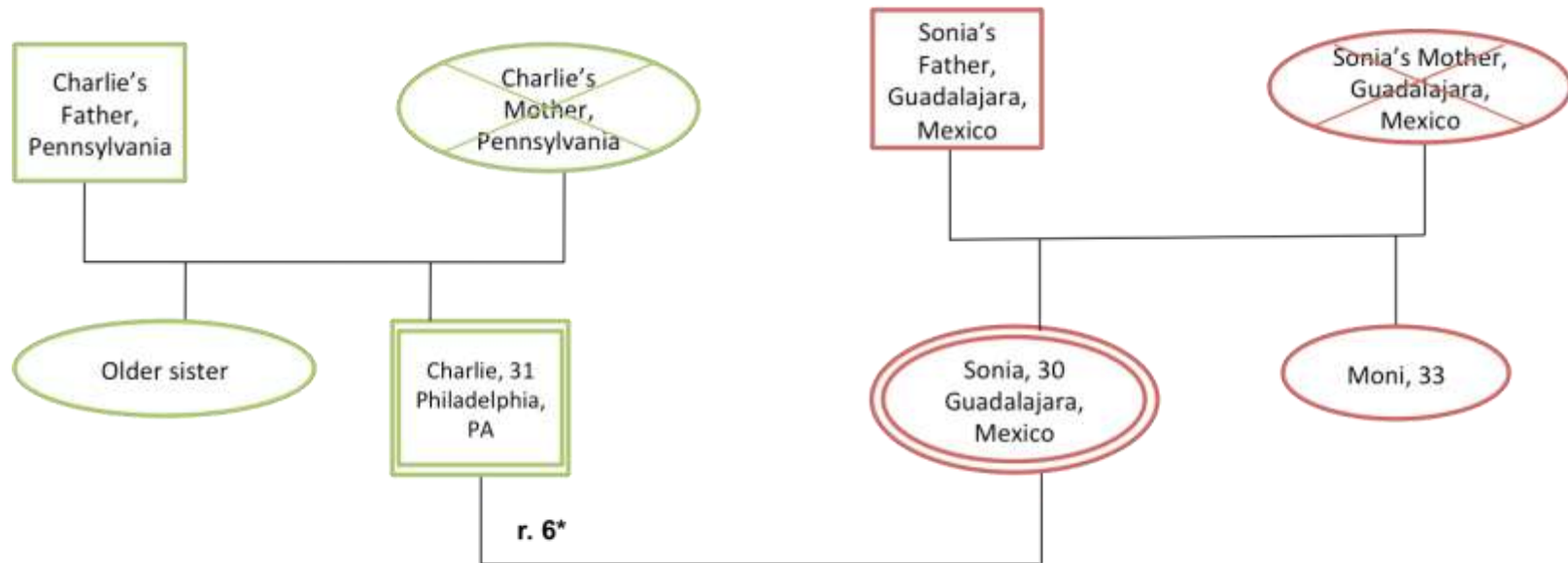
Note: Couple was interviewed together.
*In 2014, Sonia and Charlie split up.

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Couple #12

Charlie is a 31-year-old man from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and currently resides in Austin, Texas, with his partner, Sonia. He is a graduate student working on his Ph.D. His mother had a bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Health and worked as a nutritionist, but was killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver when he was 12 years old. His father has a bachelor's degree in mortuary science and is a funeral home manager in Pennsylvania where most of his family lives. His family is of Irish descent and immigrated to the U.S. as indentured servants. He has a sister named Wendy, who has a master's degree in Social Work. He has no children.

Sonia is a 30-year-old woman from Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. She lives in Austin, Texas with her partner, Charlie. She has a Ph.D. and is currently working as an adjunct professor. Her mother was from Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Her father was born prematurely in the United States when Sonia's grandmother went on a shopping trip with her family. Sonia's mother completed high school and her father has a master's degree in business. Sonia's mother passed away of cancer when she was 6 years old but before she died, she ran her husband's family paper supply store in Mexico. Her father moved her and her older sister, Moni, to Houston because he wanted to buy and rent commercial real estate. Sonia's older sister, Moni, is an oncologist who lives in Houston. Sonia and Moni both have dual citizenship (U.S. and Mexican). She has no children.

#13: Georgia and Antonio
Austin, TX

Couple #13
Georgia is a 27-year-old woman from Detroit, Michigan who has been living in Austin, Texas, for the last 5 years because of graduate school. She has a bachelor's degree and is currently working on a Ph.D. in linguistics. She lived in Mexico for a year, with her partner, Antonio, during her first year of graduate school, working on a research project on language variability within the same socio-geographical location of residence. Her mother has a bachelor's degree in education and her father has a bachelor's degree in biology as well as a Pharmacy doctorate. Her mother is a middle school English teacher and her father owns and operates his own pharmacy. She has two sisters who have master's degrees in education and are teachers. Her family is of English descent. Her father's side of the family is from Chicago, Illinois, and her mother's side of the family is from Cleveland, Ohio.

Antonio is a 28-year-old male from Mexico City, Mexico. He lives in Austin, Texas with his aunt. He came to the United States for school when he was 18 years old. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois and is currently working on a Ph.D. in anthropology. He lived in Mexico City for a year with his partner, Georgia while they were both working on research projects. His mother and her family are from Chihuahua, Mexico, but have relocated to Mexico City, Mexico. His father and his family are from the Mexico City area. His mother has a bachelor's degree in advertising and communication, a Master's degree in political science and languages, another Master's degree in international relations, and has taken a few courses in history and anthropology. She works for the Secretaria de Turismo (Secretary of Tourism) in Mexico as a public relations officer. His father has a bachelor's degree in finance, a master's in business administration and another in accounting. Antonio's father owns his own medium-sized business. He has an older sister, Cecilia, who has a bachelor's degree in fine arts and is an art teacher at the school he attended in Mexico.

#14: Marilu and Phillip
Austin, TX
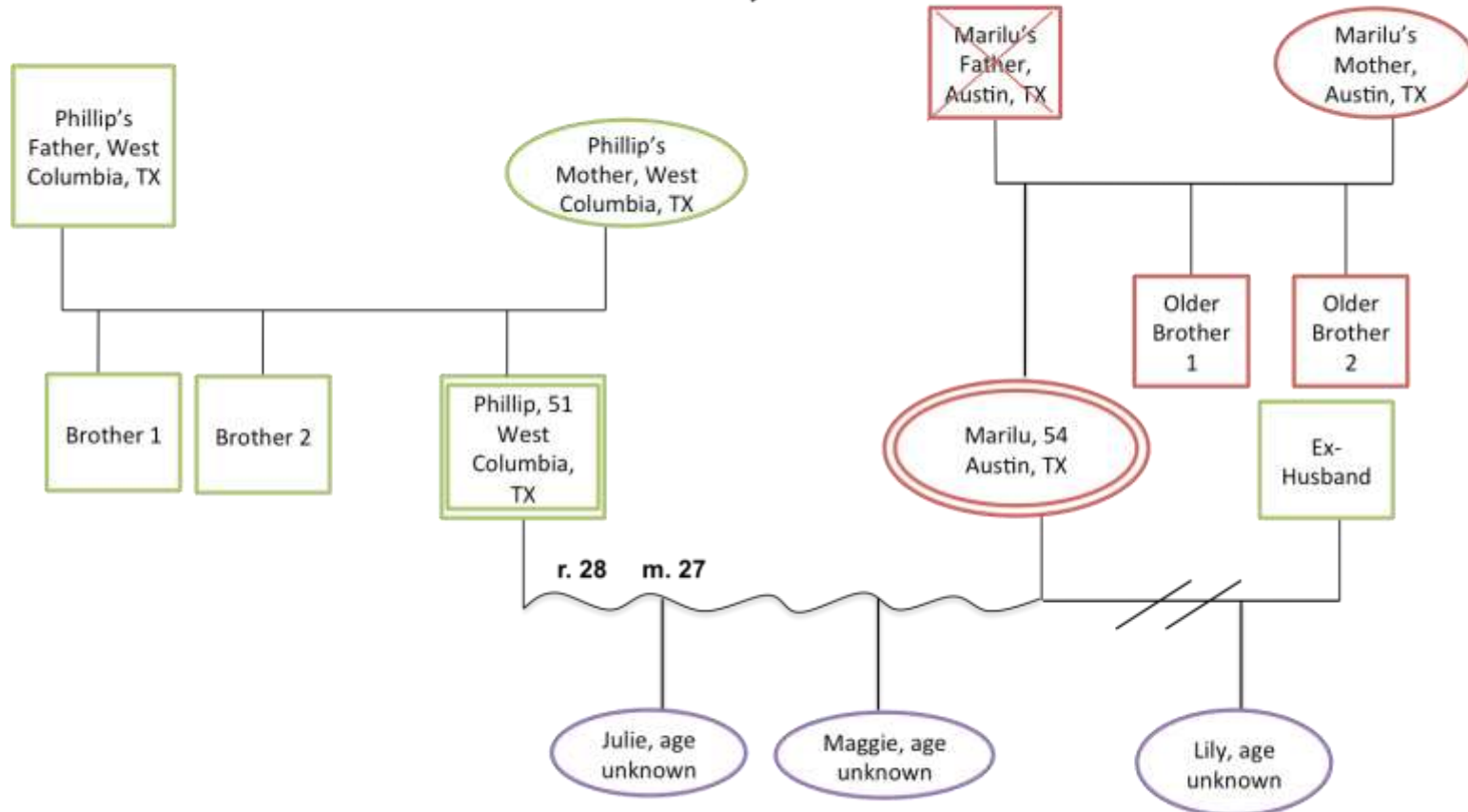
Note: This couple was about to get a divorce last known around time of the interview, but since has decided to try to work things out through counseling and support from their friends and family.
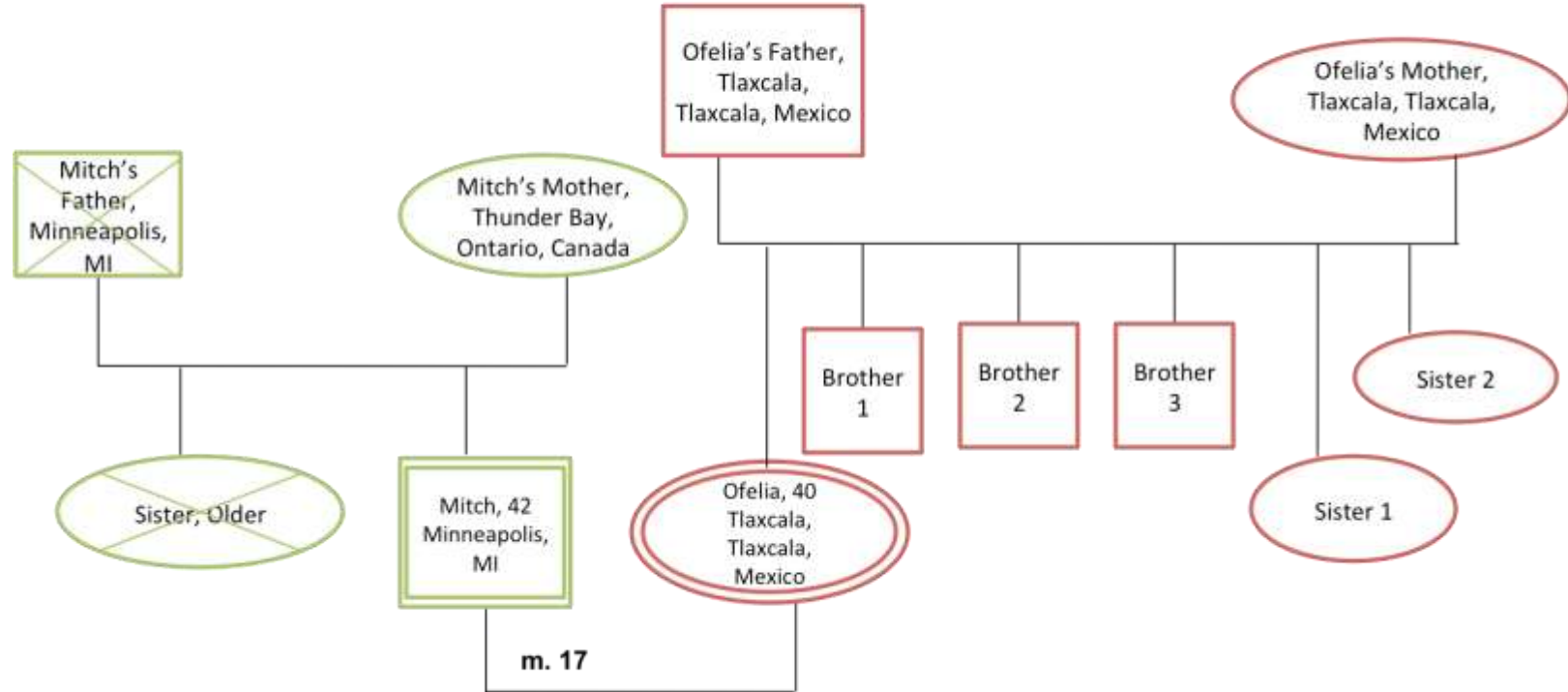
Couple #14
Philip is a 51-year-old man from West Columbia, Texas who has been residing in Austin, Texas for approximately 30 years. His highest level of education is high school and he recently retired due to injuries from his job in telecommunication. Both of his parents also completed high school. His mother was a school nurse and his father worked in construction. His family is of English and Irish descent, primarily concentrated on the east coast. His family migrated to Texas after the Civil War and has been working in construction ever since. His family is scattered all over Texas but his brothers live in San Antonio and Houston. He has two daughters, a stepdaughter, and three grandchildren (two boys and one girl). His youngest daughter graduated from Sam Houston State University and works for an advertising agency in Houston, his oldest daughter lives in Dallas and is working as a teacher, and his stepdaughter lives in San Antonio and is a nurse.

Marilu is a 55-year-old woman from Austin Texas who currently resides there with her husband, Philip. She has a master's degree and is currently working on her Ph.D. Both of her parents are high school graduates and her mother worked was secretary for a Catholic church while her father was a manager at a factory. Her mother's side of the family is from San Antonio, and her father's side is from Corpus Christi. Her paternal grandfather was a diesel mechanic and moved his family to Austin in search of better job opportunities. Her family on her father's side can be traced to Tamaulipas, Mexico. She has two older brothers, one of which is an alcoholic and lives with her. Her other brother also lives in Austin and is a project manager. She has three daughters, one from a previous marriage, two from her marriage to Philip, and three grandchildren.
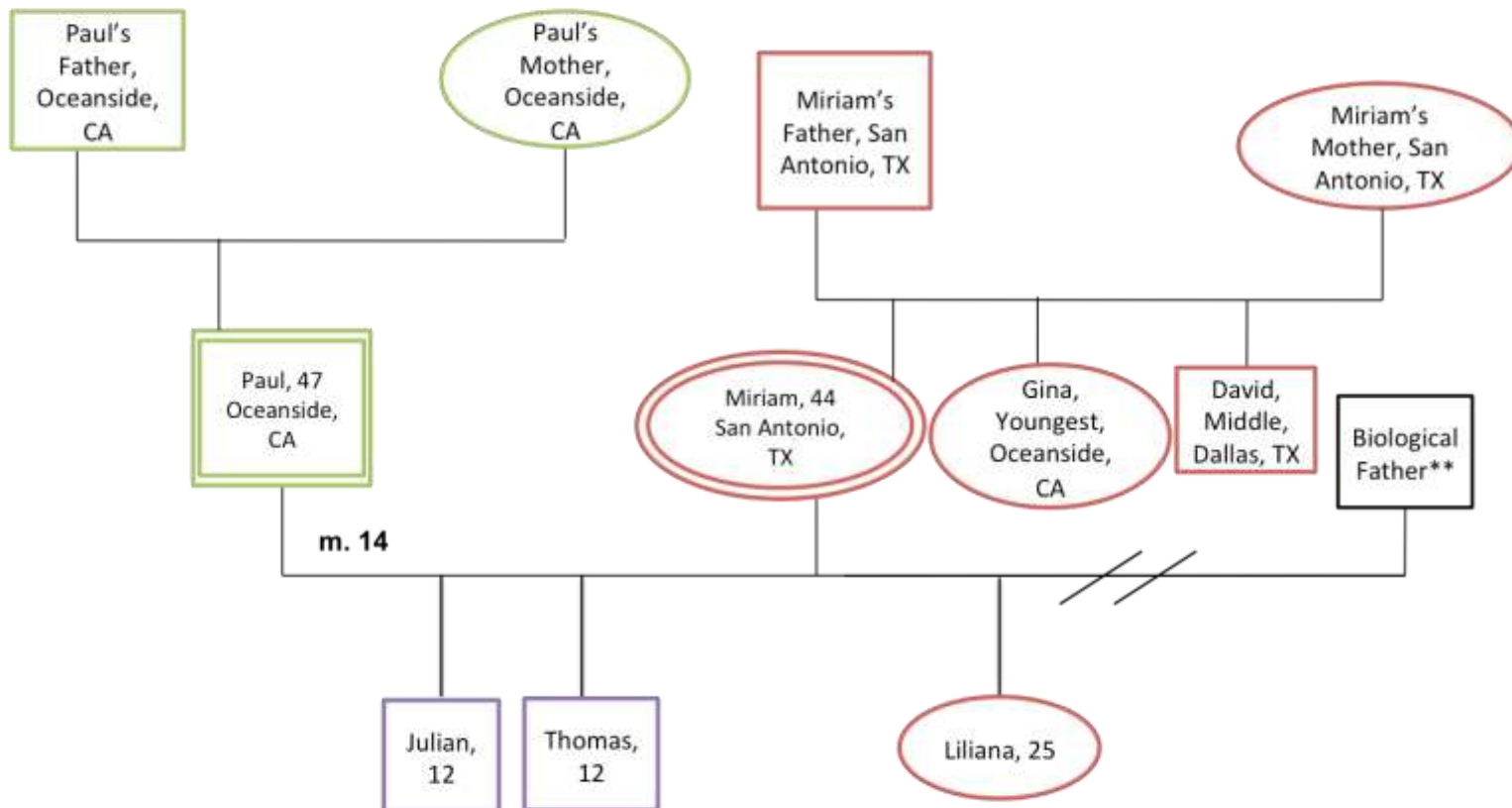
#15: Ofelia and Mitch
Austin, TX

Note: Couple has relocated for employment and was interviewed together.

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Couple #15

Mitch is a 42-year-old man from Minneapolis, Minnesota who at the time of the interview lived in Austin, Texas with his wife, Ofelia (they currently live on the east coast). He has a master's degree and works as a Crisis Intervention Counselor. Both his parents are high school graduates and his mother previously worked at a paper mill and as a seamstress before retiring and his father was a truck driver. His father passed away from a heart attack. His mother is Canadian and she left Canada when she was 20 years old, moving to Minneapolis in search of work. She met her husband on her way to Minneapolis and was with him until he passed away. His older sister passed away from diabetes-related complications, leaving him as the only surviving child of his parent's marriage.

Ofelia is a 40-year-old woman originally from Tlaxcala, Tlaxcala, Mexico, who moved to the U.S. approximately 20 years ago. At the time of the interview, her and Mitch lived in Austin, Texas, but they have since moved to the east coast for employment. Ofelia has a Ph.D. and works as a researcher at a major research university. Both of her parents have bachelor's degrees and her mother is a nurse while her father is a retired government employee. She went to the Institute Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITSEM), a highly ranked university in Monterrey where she obtained a bachelor's degree in health administration and participated in a study abroad program with the University of Texas. After her experience studying abroad in Austin, she permanently moved there and began volunteering at one of the clinics she had previously interned at until she was hired on full-time. Her entire family is and currently resides in Tlaxcala, Tlaxcala, México. She is the oldest of six children (she has three brothers and two sisters) and has a strong relationship with all of them, especially her youngest sister.

#16: Miriam* and Paul
Austin, TX

Paul's Father, Oceanside, CA

Paul's Mother, Oceanside, CA

Miriam's Father, San Antonio, TX

Miriam's Mother, San Antonio, TX

Paul, 47 Oceanside, CA

Miriam, 44 San Antonio, TX

Gina, Youngest, Oceanside, CA

David, Middle, Dallas, TX

Biological Father**

m. 14

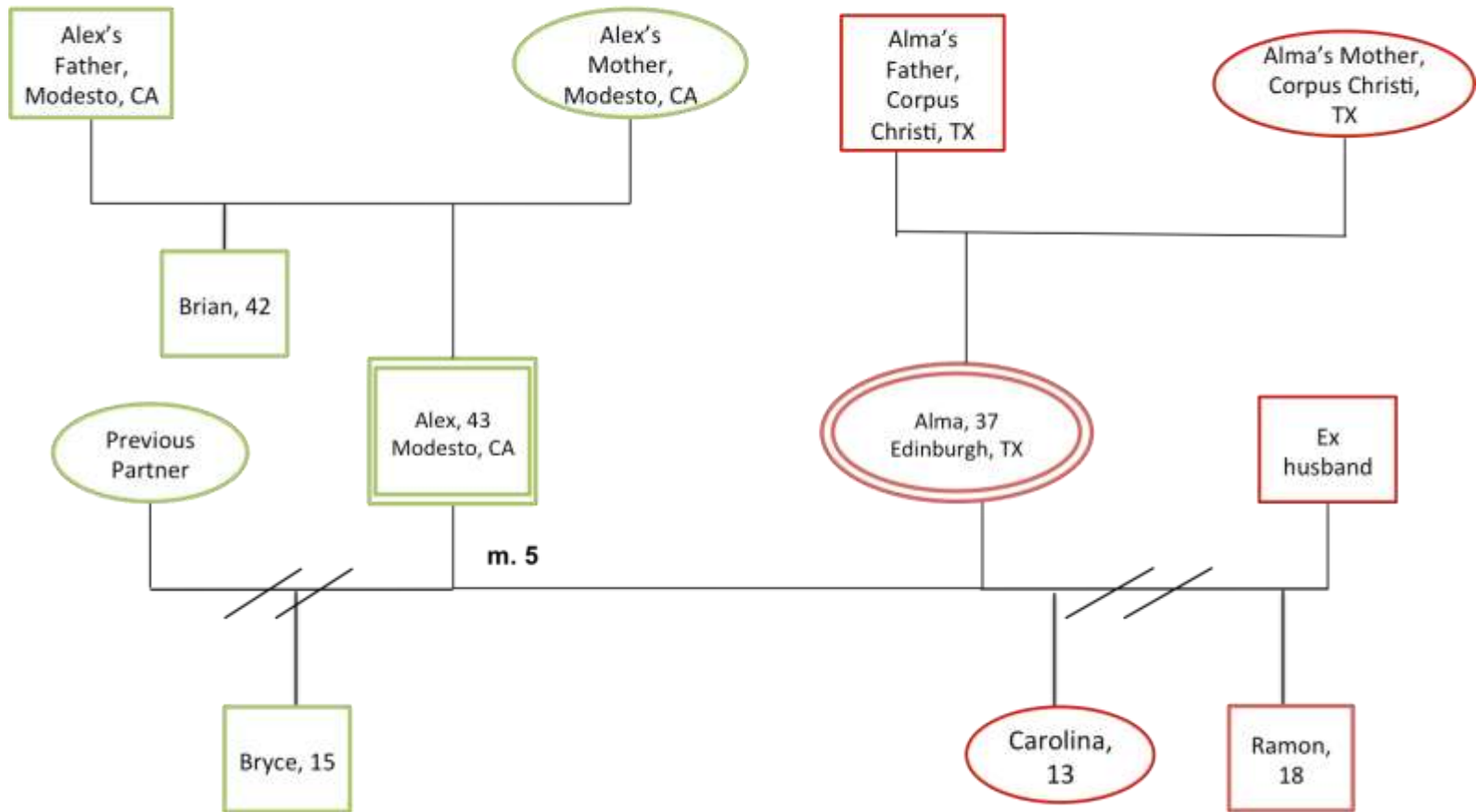Julian, 12

Thomas, 12

Liliana, 25

* Mother to Liiana (#20).

**Miriam was raped and became pregnant with Liliana (#20). A divorce symbology has been used for their relationship but it should be noted that they were neither in a committed nor consensual relationship.

Couple #16

Paul is a 47-year-old man from Oceanside, California who currently lives in Austin, Texas with his wife, Miriam. He has a master's degree and works as a military service contractor. He became a mechanical engineer with the GI Bill he obtained after serving several tours. His family is of English and Irish descent and has a long legacy of military involvement in the Marines and Navy. Both of his parents graduated from high school and his mother worked as an office manager for a doctor's office while his father had a full military career and is now a retired marine. He is an only child. He and Miriam have twin boys who are twelve years old. He has a stepdaughter, Liliana, who is 25 years old.

Miriam is a 44-year-old woman from San Antonio, Texas, who moved to San Diego, California with her sister, Gina, when she was 24 years old. She has been living in Austin, Texas with her husband, Paul, since 2008. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in accounting. She works as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Both of her parents, who are of Mexican descent, completed high school in San Antonio, Texas and her mother was a stay at home mom until her husband left her, forcing her into the labor market to sustain her family. She found employment as a domestic worker and nanny. Miriam does not know what her father did for a living since her mother refuses to talk about him. Her mother lives in San Antonio. Miriam is the oldest of three children, her sister, Gina, is an insurance agent in Oceanside, California and her brother, David, is a manager for a retail store in Dallas, Texas. Miriam has three children, Liliana (who was also interviewed for this study and is part of couple #20) and twelve year old twin boys. Miriam was raped when she was 18 years old and subsequently became pregnant with Liliana. She had Liliana when she was 19 years old and raised her as her sister instead of her daughter.

#17: Alma and Alex*
Austin, TX

Alex's Father, Modesto, CA

Alex's Mother, Modesto, CA

Alma's Father, Corpus Christi, TX

Alma's Mother, Corpus Christi, TX

Brian, 42

Previous Partner

Alex, 43 Modesto, CA

Alma, 37 Edinburgh, TX

Ex husband

m. 5

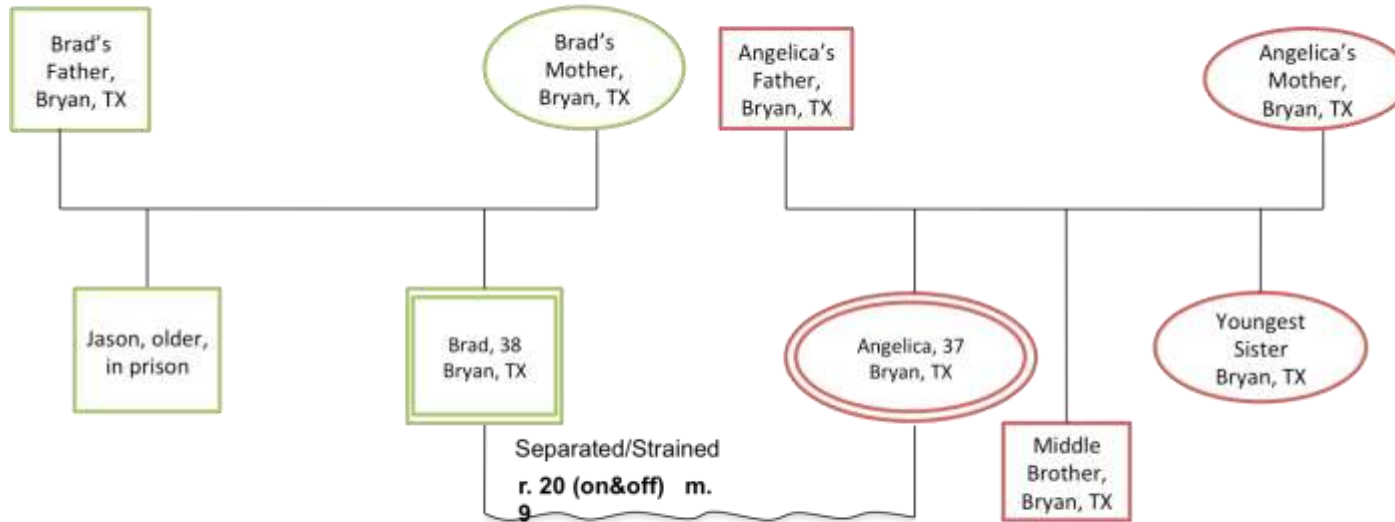Bryce, 15

Carolina, 13

Ramon, 18

*Note: Couple relocated to the East Coast for employment

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Couple #17

Alex is a 43-year-old man from Modesto, California who at the time of this interview was residing in Austin, Texas, with his wife Alma. Alex has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and works in the military doing electronic maintenance. His mother's side of the family is of German descent and his father's family is of English descent. Both of his parents were born and raised in California and both completed high school. His mother worked as a customer service representative and his father was a metal spinner. They are both now enjoying retirement. He has one brother, Brian, who is 42-years-old, lives in California, is married with two children and works for a metal supply company as a union representative. Alex has a 15-year-old son, Bryce, from a previous marriage and has two stepchildren, Lucas, 18, and Camila, 13, from his wife's previous marriage.

Alma is a 37-year-old woman from Edingburg, Texas who lives in Austin, Texas in order to be close to her family. She has a master's degree in criminal justice, works in retail and as a housewife. Her mother finished middle school, was a housewife and later started working as a domestic worker. Her father finished college and worked as a janitor for a school district. Because of their undocumented immigration status (on her mom's side) and her father's inability to find employment after he obtained his bachelor's degree, her parents were unable to obtain the upward mobility they expected. Alma has a younger sister, Alondra, who works as a social worker in the Rio Grande Valley. Her maternal grandparents and their children migrated from Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, to Corpus Christi, Texas, to help open a business. Her parents invested their life savings on a business, which upon their migration to the U.S. they discovered was a scam. Her father eventually got a job managing day laborers. Her father's side of the family has been in Texas for many generations and it is suspected that they were an affluent Spanish family. She has two children, Lucas and Camila, with her ex-husband whom she divorced, remarried, and then divorced again.

#18: Angelica and Brad
Austin, TX

Brad's Father, Bryan, TX

Brad's Mother, Bryan, TX

Angelica's Father, Bryan, TX

Angelica's Mother, Bryan, TX

Jason, older, in prison

Brad, 38 Bryan, TX

Angelica, 37 Bryan, TX

Youngest Sister Bryan, TX

Separated/Strained

r. 20 (on&off)   m. 9

Middle Brother, Bryan, TX

Note: At time of interview couple's relationship was obviously strained and last known, this couple was about to get a divorce. Although they are not legally divorced or separated (because of lack of financial means to do so), they have both decided to go their own way. Brad is currently dating a white woman who lives in Maine during the summer months and Texas during the winter months (he splits his time between those two locations as well, returning to live with his aging parents in Texas during winter months. Angelica remains in San Antonio and is in a new relationship with a white man from Austin.
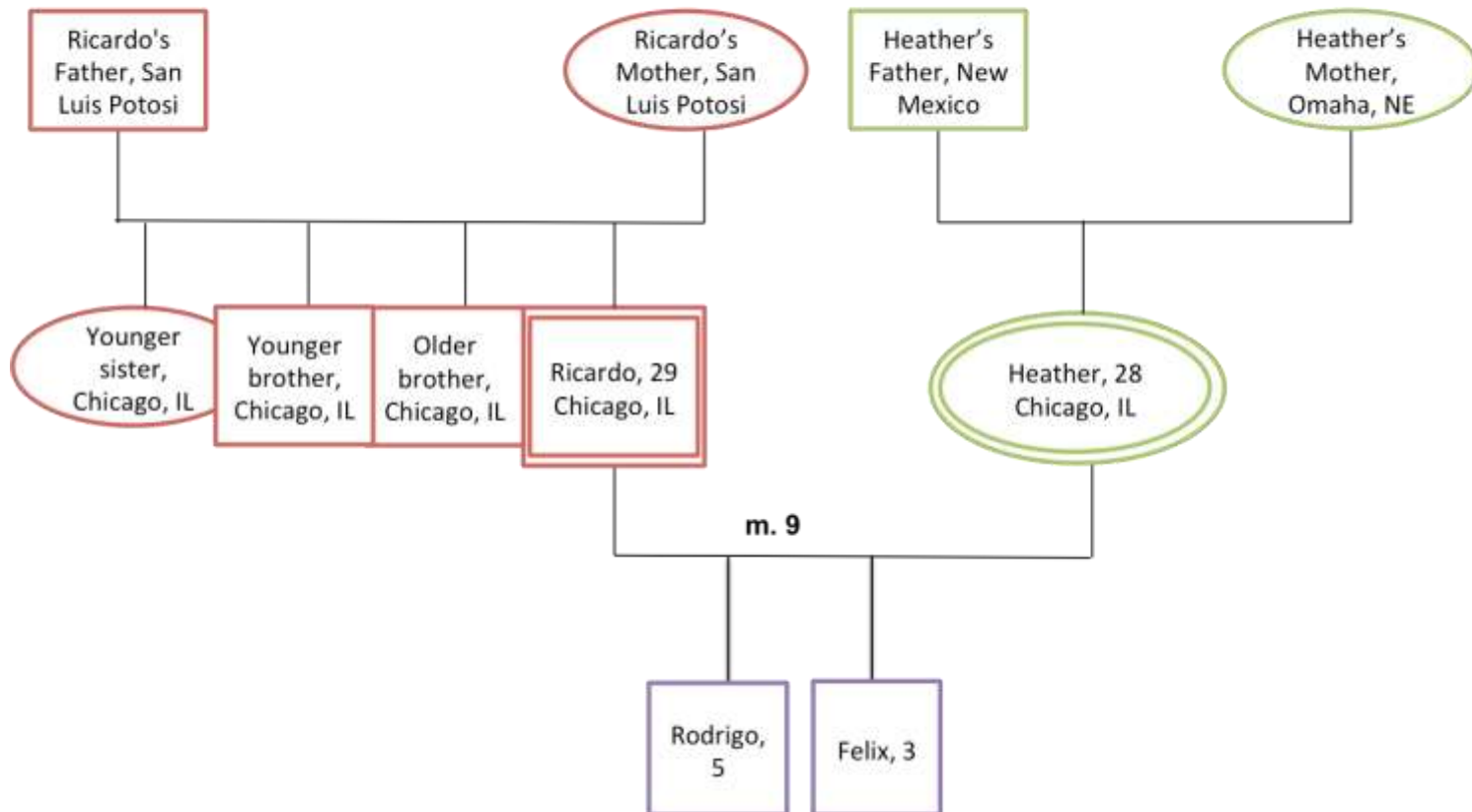
Couple #18
Brad is a 38-year-old man from Bryan, Texas who at the time of the interview lived in Austin, Texas with his now ex-wife, Angelica. Brad finished high school and has been unemployed for an indefinite amount of time working odd jobs here and there. He has been in and out of jail, which makes it hard for him to find a stable job. He sometimes works as a contract laborer or a day laborer. He is a former drug addict. Both of his parents completed high school. His mother is an elementary school librarian and his father works in maintenance. He has an older brother, Jason, who is currently in prison. His family is of Irish descent and most of his family is located within the Bryan/College Station area.

Angelica is a 37-year-old woman from Bryan, Texas. She lived in College Station for a few years and has been in Austin, Texas, for about 10 years. She completed high school and is a manager of a pet store. Her entire family is from Bryan, Texas. She does not know where her ancestry can be traced to, but she knows that she is of Mexican descent. Both of her parents completed high school and her mother works as a beautician while her father worked as a butcher for a long time before losing his job. He now works for a major poultry producer in Texas. She has one sister and one brother who both live in Bryan. Her sister is also a beautician and her brother works for a computer store's technical support group. She is also a former drug addict.

#19: Heather and Ricardo
Austin, TX

Ricardo's Father, San Luis Potosi

Ricardo's Mother, San Luis Potosi

Heather's Father, New Mexico

Heather's Mother, Omaha, NE

Younger sister, Chicago, IL

Younger brother, Chicago, IL

Older brother, Chicago, IL

Ricardo, 29 Chicago, IL

Heather, 28 Chicago, IL

m. 9

Rodrigo, 5

Felix, 3

Couple #19

Heather is a 28-year-old woman from Chicago, Illinois who lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and two children because of a recent job relocation. She has a bachelor's degree from Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois, and is a research scientist for a pharmaceutical company. Her mother has a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts and is a freelance artist. Her father has a master's degree in education and is a teacher and an educational services business owner. She is an only child. Her mother is from Nebraska and claims to be part Native American and her father is from New Mexico. Her father's side of the family is Polish and Irish. She has two sons with husband, Ricardo.

Ricardo is a 29-year-old man from Chicago, Illinois who lives in Austin, Texas with his wife and two sons because of his wife's job relocation. He has a bachelor's degree and is an architect. His mother has a GED and his father completed middle school. His family is from San Luis Potosí, Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. after his grandfather passed away. In 1986, under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) amnesty, his parents and grandmother obtained legal status in the U.S. His mother has worked as a farmworker, cook, and secretary while his father was a farmworker, gardener, and field manager. He has three siblings, all of whom were born in the United States— an older brother, a younger brother, and a younger sister, who have all completed high school and have some college background. His older brother is a mechanic, his younger brother is a college student and caretaker to their aging parents, and his younger sister is a stay at home mom. Ricardo has two sons from his marriage to Heather.

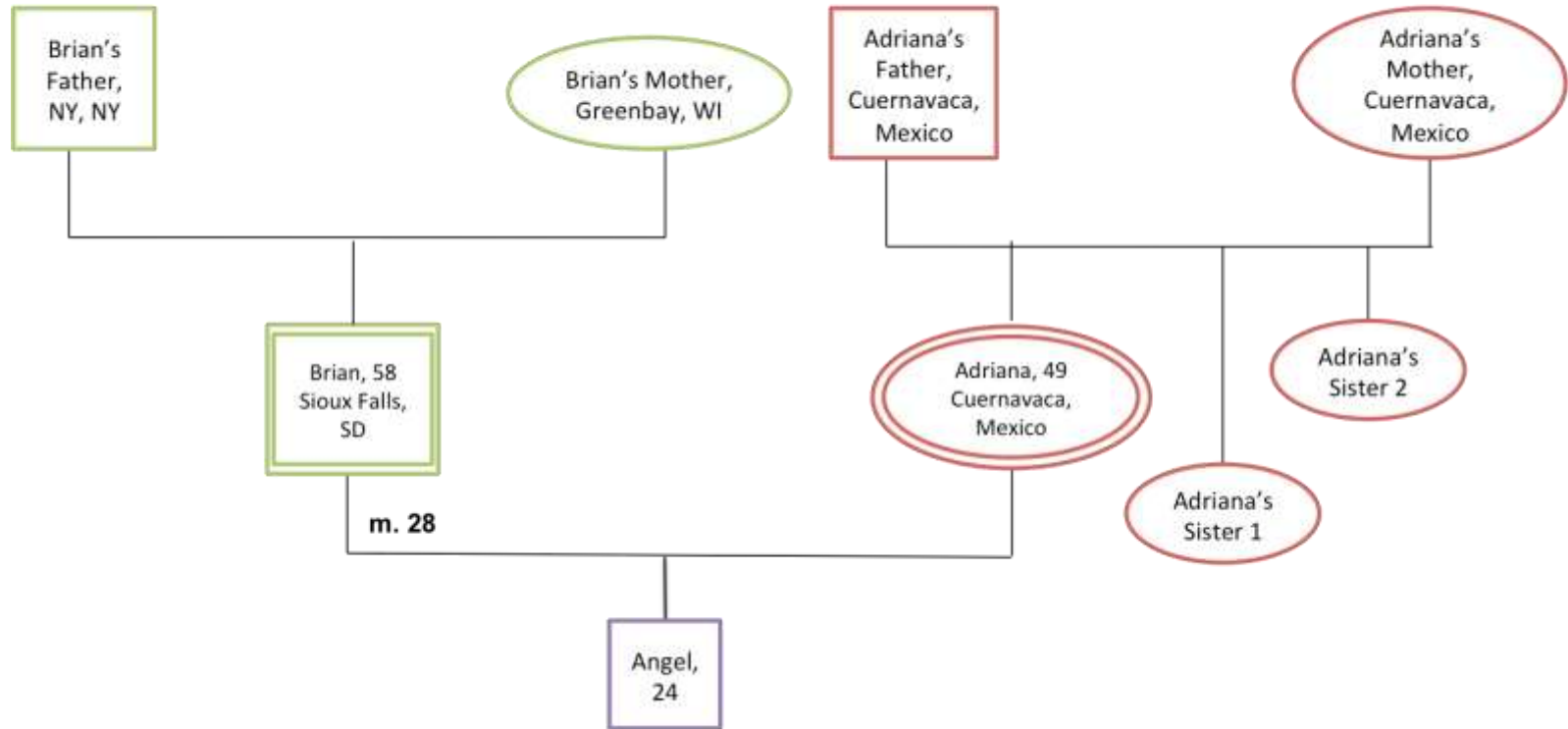# #20: Liliana* and Brett
Austin, TX
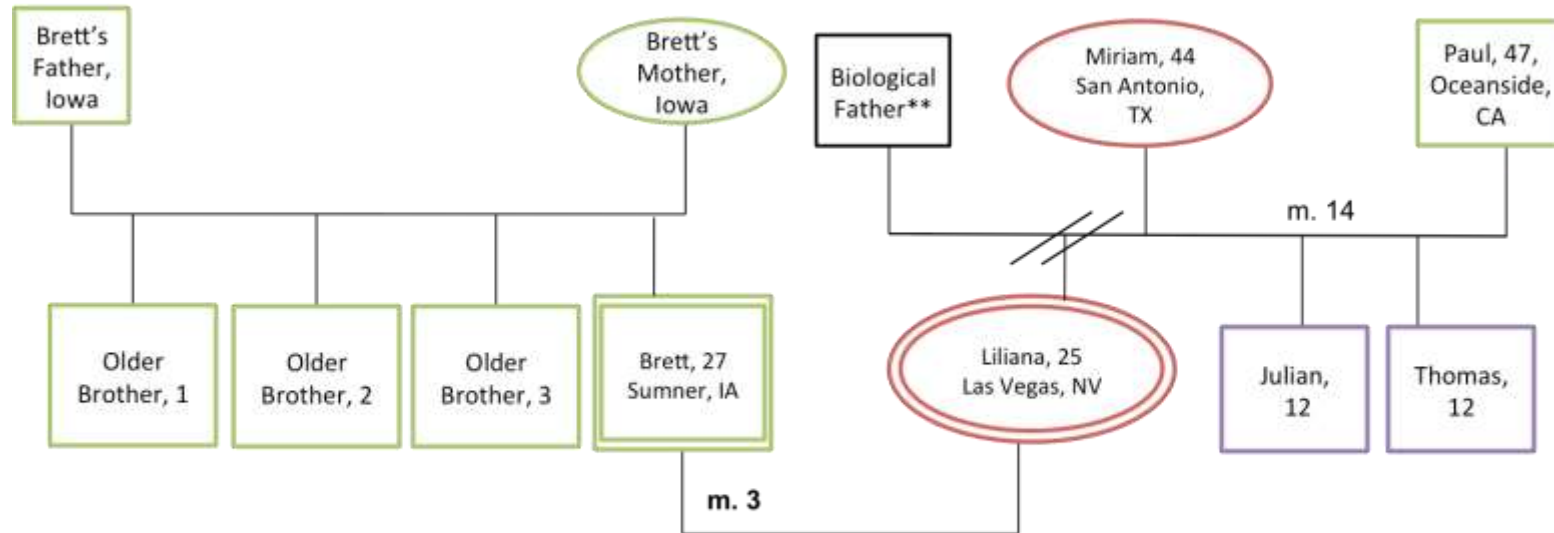
* Daughter to Miriam (#16)
** Miriam (#20) was raped and became pregnant with Liliana (#16). A divorce symbology has been used for their relationship but it should be noted that they were neither in a committed nor consensual relationship.

Couple #20

Brett is a 27-year-old man from Sumner, Iowa. He relocated to California when he was stationed there for the Navy. He currently lives in Austin, Texas. He is a Navy reservist and a student working on his bachelor's degree in Biology so he can go to medical school. He works part time in the military. Both his mother and father have bachelor's degrees. He does not specify his mother's occupation, but his father enlisted in the Navy and later became a police officer. He has three older brothers who have all been in the Navy and have obtained associate's degrees. His family is of English and Dutch descent.

Liliana is a 25-year-old woman born in Las Vegas, Nevada. She has lived in San Antonio and spent most of her life living in California. Her mother is of Mexican descent, and does not know her father's ancestry since she is the product of rape (see Couple 16's biography). She lives in Austin, Texas with her husband, Brett, so he could pursue his degree in biology. She has some college experience and is currently working as a massage therapist. Her mother, Miriam (Couple 16) has a master's degree in accounting. Her stepfather, Paul (16), is a military service contractor. Liliana has two half brothers who are twins.

#21: Adriana and Brian
Houston, TX

Brian's Father, NY, NY

Brian's Mother, Greenbay, WI

Adriana's Father, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Adriana's Mother, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Brian, 58 Sioux Falls, SD

Adriana, 49 Cuernavaca, Mexico

Adriana's Sister 2

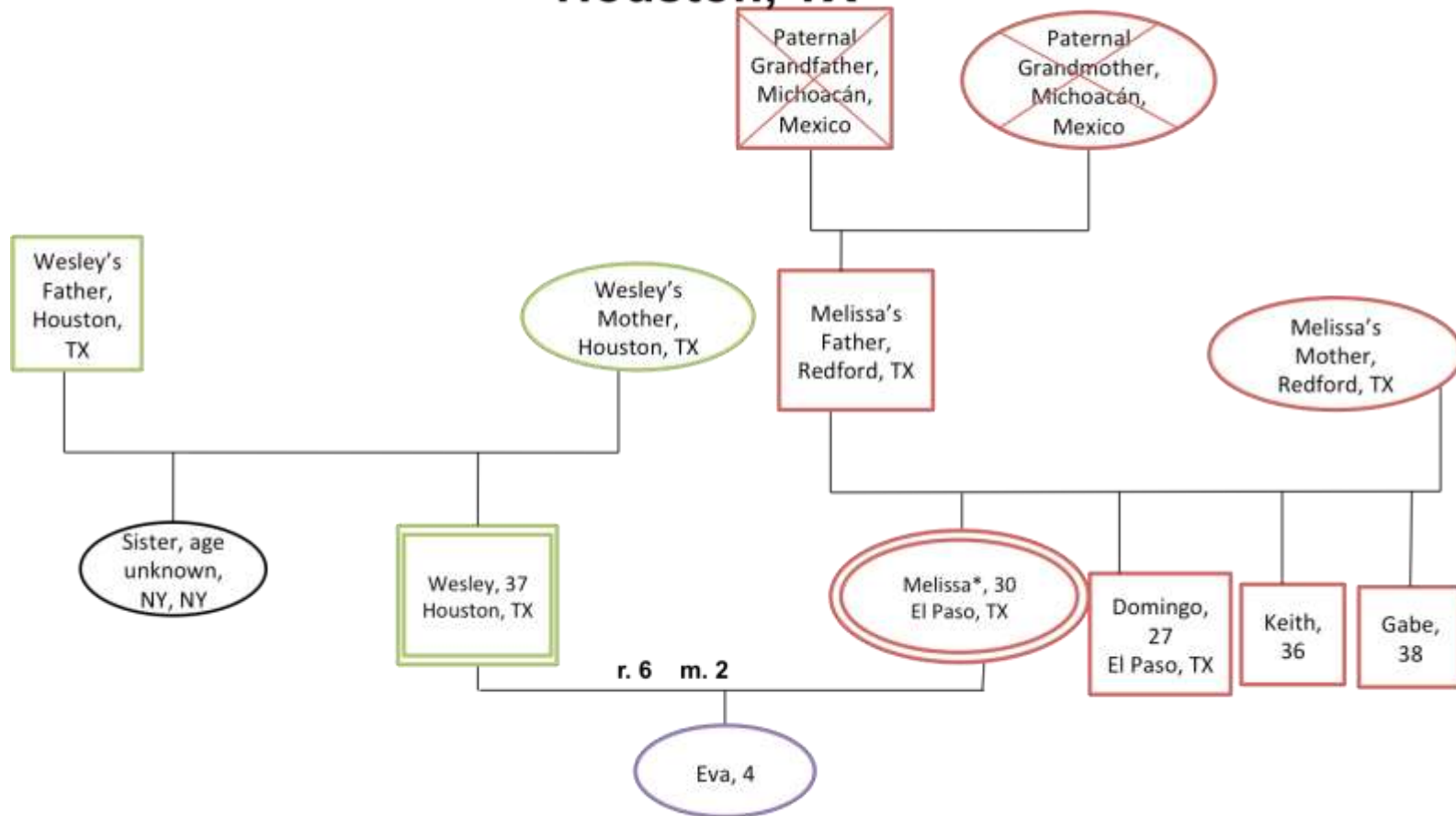Adriana's Sister 1

m. 28

Angel, 24

Note: Couple was interviewed together. They also relocated to Mexico City temporarily to help with Adriana's aging parents.

Couple #21

Brian is a 58-year-old man from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He lives in Houston, Texas with his wife Adriana. He has a Ph.D. and works as a petroleum engineer. His mother has a bachelor's degree and his father has a Ph.D. His mother has been a school nurse and a stay at home mother. His father was a professor. He is an only child and his parents have passed away. His mother was originally from Green Bay, Wisconsin, and his father was originally from New York City. Both of his parents were Irish Catholic. He lived in Mexico City for about 7-8 years and worked for the oil company. He has a son with Adriana.

Adriana is a 49-year-old woman from Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. She lives in Houston, Texas with her husband. She has a bachelor's degree and works as a museum curator. Her mother has a bachelor's degree and is a teacher, while her father has a master's degree and is a politician. She has two sisters who live in Cuernavaca and are taking care of her aging father. One of her sisters owns a boutique and her other sister owns the majority of her husband's company. Her family is either from Cuernavaca or Mexico City. She comes from a long line of politicians. She has a son with Brian.

#22: Melissa* and Wesley
Houston, TX

Paternal Grandfather, Michoacán, Mexico

Paternal Grandmother, Michoacán, Mexico

Wesley's Father, Houston, TX

Wesley's Mother, Houston, TX

Melissa's Father, Redford, TX

Melissa's Mother, Redford, TX

Sister, age unknown, NY, NY

Wesley, 37 Houston, TX

Melissa*, 30 El Paso, TX

Domingo, 27 El Paso, TX

Keith, 36

Gabe, 38

r. 6   m. 2

Eva, 4

Note: Wesley and his sister are both adopted and although the race of his sister isn't certain, it can almost certainly be assumed she is white.
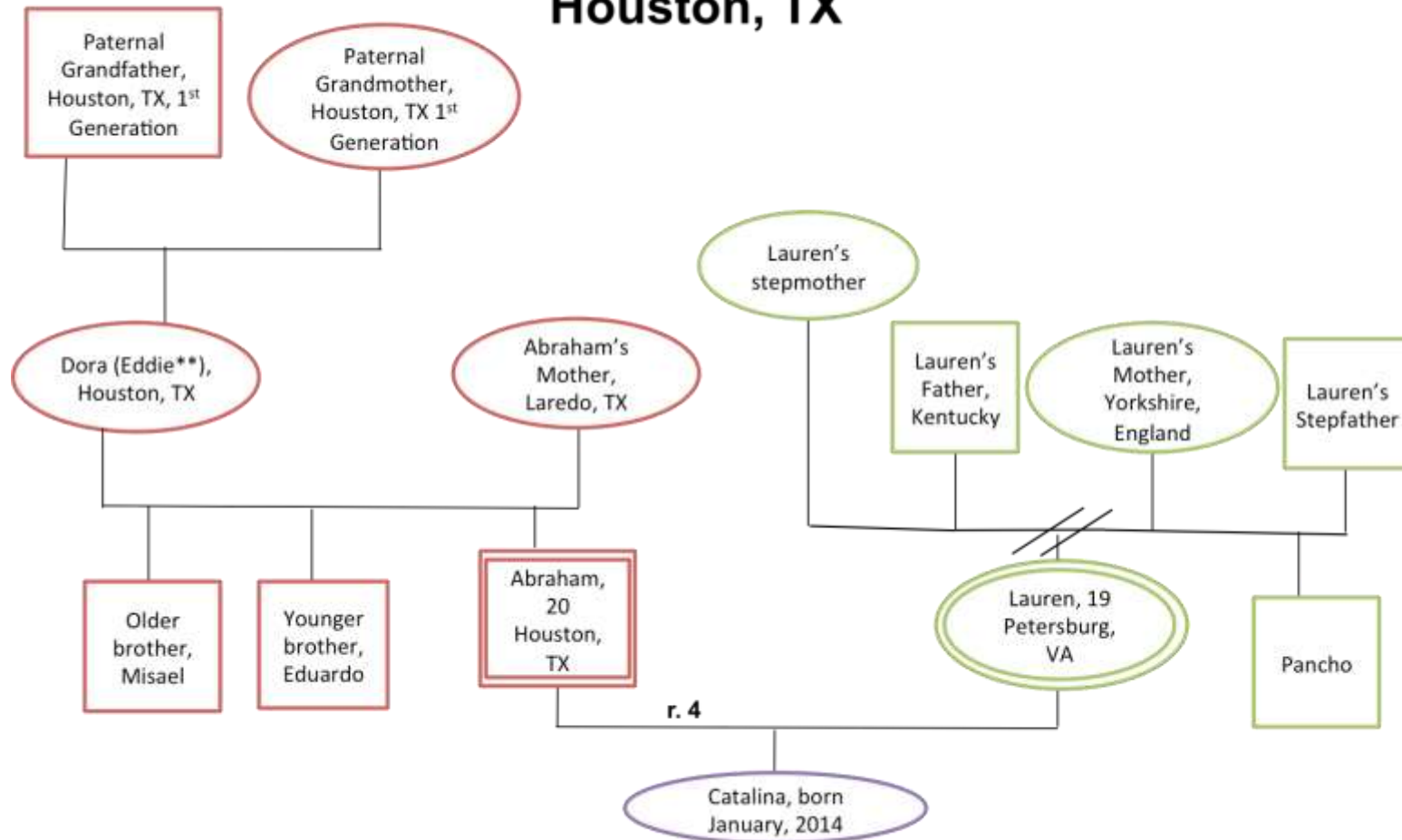* Melissa is Domingo's (#7) sister

298

Couple #22

Wesley is a 37-year-old man from Houston, Texas. He was adopted at a young so he is not sure of his biological parents' ancestry, but his adopted parents are of Irish descent, having migrated first to Canada and then made their way to the United States, Houston area. He completed high school and is a graphic designer and music producer. He has promoted notorious Houston rappers and worked on their album designs. Both of his adopted parents completed high school. His mother is a daycare teacher and his father is a farmer. He has an adoptive sister who lives in New York and recently got married. His adoptive father was also adopted while his adoptive mother is of English descent. He has a daughter with Melissa and her name is Eva. He is Domingo's (Couple #7) brother in law.

Melissa is a 30-year-old woman originally from El Paso, Texas, who currently lives in Houston, Texas. She has a bachelor's degree and is working on her law degree at a law school in Houston. She wants to be specialized and trained in immigration law. Both of her parents have bachelor's degrees. Her mother is a real estate agent and her father is a retired U.S. Department of Security and now owns his own business teaching others how to train law enforcement agents on immigration and border security. Her family history is the same as her brother Domingo's (Couple #7). Melissa is the youngest of four siblings and the only female. She has a daughter named Eva.

#23: Lauren and Abraham
Houston, TX

Paternal Grandfather, Houston, TX, 1st Generation

Paternal Grandmother, Houston, TX 1st Generation

Lauren's stepmother

Dora (Eddie**), Houston, TX

Abraham's Mother, Laredo, TX

Lauren's Father, Kentucky

Lauren's Mother, Yorkshire, England

Lauren's Stepfather

Older brother, Misael

Younger brother, Eduardo

Abraham, 20 Houston, TX

Lauren, 19 Petersburg, VA

Pancho

r. 4

Catalina, born January, 2014

** Dora is Abraham's biological father who in his adult life as man, Eddie, came out as a trans*woman. She lives her life as a woman.

300

Couple #23

Lauren is a 19-year-old woman from Petersburg, Virginia who currently lives in Houston, Texas with her mom and brother. She has completed high school and begun her bachelor's degree in photography. Her mother has a bachelor's degree and is an interior designer. Her father completed high school and is in the army infantry. She has a 7-year-old brother named Pancho, from her mother's soon to be second marriage. Her mother is of English descent, traced to Yorkshire, England, and is rumored to be part of the nobility. Her father is from Kentucky and it is believed that his family is from Switzerland, while it is known for a fact that his family lived in Austria and Germany. Her parents are divorced and both eventually remarried while maintaining a good friendship. Both of her grandfathers were in the military.

Abraham is a 20-year-old male from Houston, Texas. He has completed high school and is a musician and works in retail. Both of his parents completed high school. His mother is a teacher and his father is a technician in manufacturing. His family is originally from Mexico. His grandmother from his father's side was born in Houston while his great grandparents migrated from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to El Paso, Texas. His father has recently begun transitioning to a transgender woman and has begun sexual reassignment and goes by Dora. While it was an initial shock and an adjustment the family has been very supportive of Dora. Abraham's family did seek another church, one that would be accepting of Dora, to boost their morale and lend their support to Dora through her transition. His mother's side of the family is from Laredo. He has an older brother, Misael and a younger brother, Eduardo. Prior to Lauren, Abraham was dating one of her friends. They have been together for over 4 years.

As of January 24, 2014, Lauren and Abraham welcomed their first daughter, Catalina.

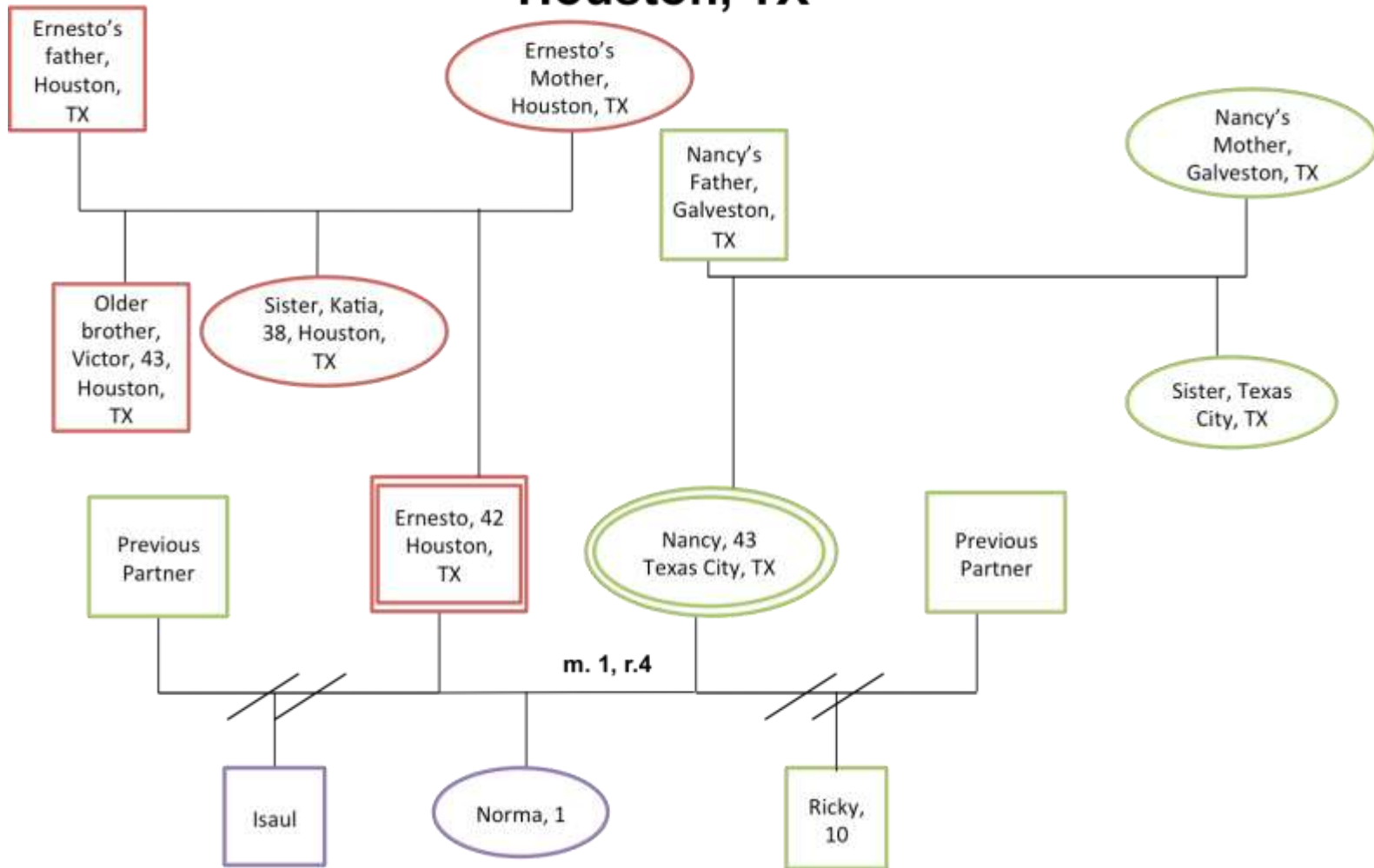# #24: Lupe and Tony
Houston, TX
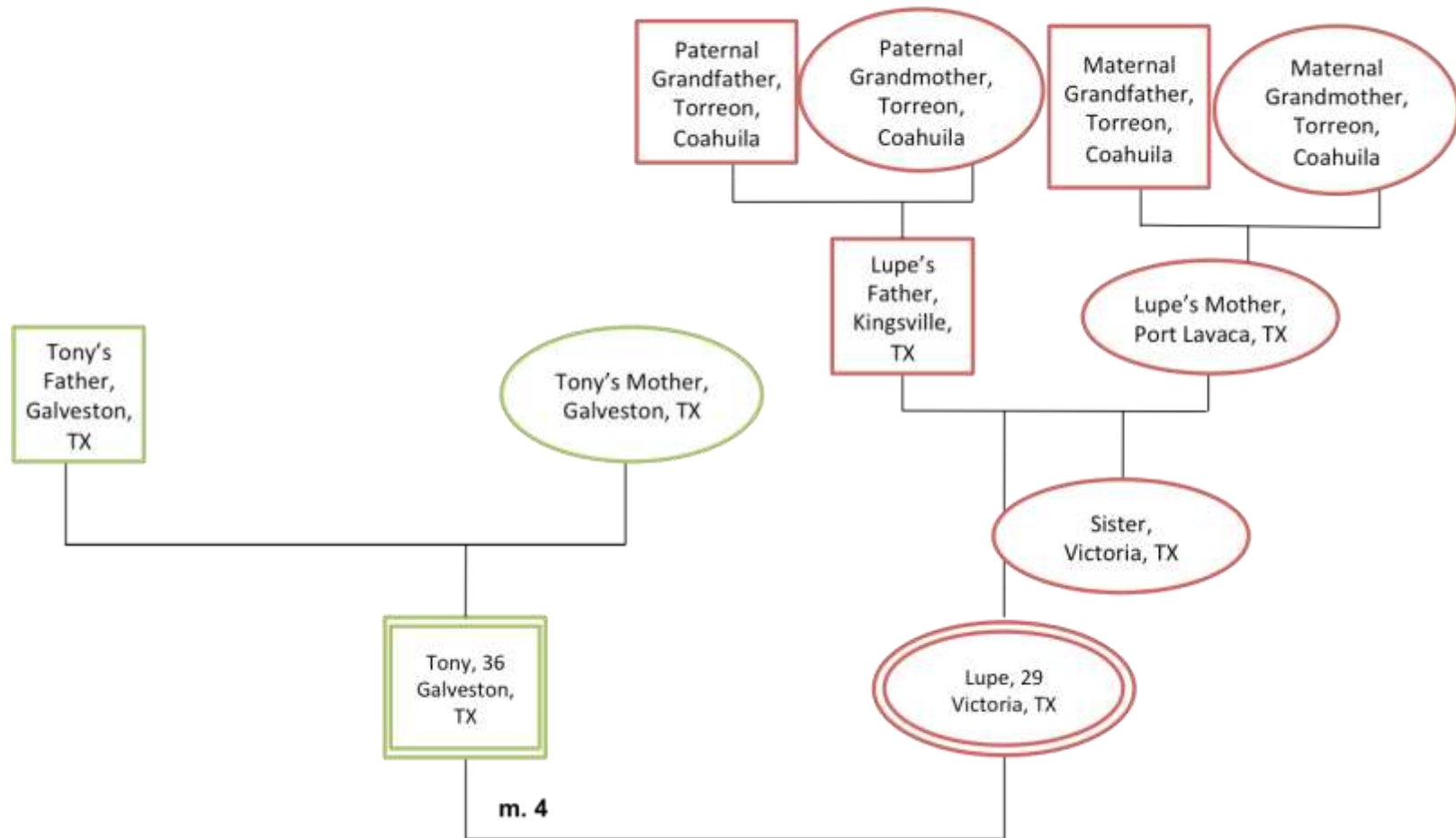
Note: Couple was interviewed together.

Couple #24

Tony is a 36-year-old man from Galveston, Texas who lives in Houston. He has a bachelor's degree in education and is a middle school English teacher. Both of his parents completed high school and his mother worked as a nurse while his father worked in insurance. He is an only child. His family ancestry is of Polish descent with the first members of his family arriving in the United States after the 1800s. Some of his ancestors fought in the Civil War and were against slavery. His family is in South Padre Island or Galveston.

Lupe is a 29-year-old woman born in Port Lavaca, Texas but moved to Victoria, Texas because her father sought a better job. She lives in Houston, Texas with her husband, Tony. She completed high school and is an ESL (English as a Second Language) tutor and educator. As of May 2014 she received her bachelor's degree in education. Both of her parents completed high school and her mother was a stay at home mom while her father worked in manufacturing. Her father passed away about seven years ago. She has a sister who also graduated from high school, works in a hotel as a housekeeping manager, and lives with her mother. Her mother was from Port Lavaca and her father was from Kingsville. Her grandparents from both sides were both from Torreón, Coahuila, México.

#25: Nancy and Ernesto
Houston, TX

Ernesto's father, Houston, TX

Ernesto's Mother, Houston, TX

Nancy's Father, Galveston, TX

Nancy's Mother, Galveston, TX

Older brother, Victor, 43, Houston, TX

Sister, Katia, 38, Houston, TX

Sister, Texas City, TX

Previous Partner

Ernesto, 42 Houston, TX

Nancy, 43 Texas City, TX

Previous Partner

m. 1, r.4
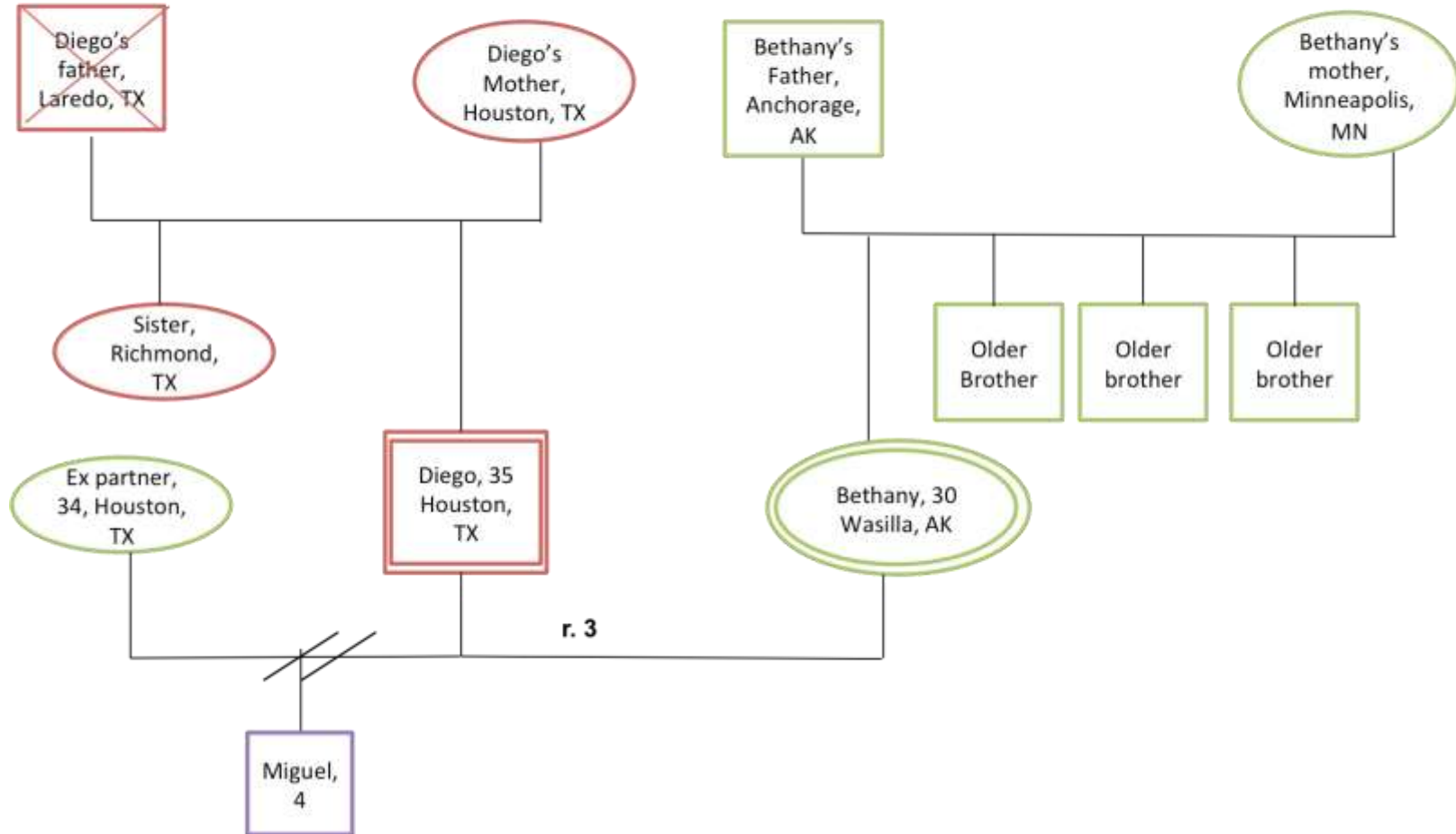
Isaul

Norma, 1

Ricky, 10

304

Couple #25

Nancy is a 43-year-old woman from Texas City, Texas, who lives in Houston, Texas with her husband and their daughter. She has a bachelor's degree and is the president and owner of a pump rental company in Texas. Her mother completed high school and was a secretary, stay at home mom, bookkeeper, and she is now retired. Her father had a bachelor's degree and was a business owner. He passed away in 2005. She has one sister, who lives in Portland, Oregon, is a stay at home mom, has four children, and her husband is in the military. Her father's side of the family is Swedish, and his ancestors migrated to California, then Texas. Her mother's side of the family is Russian. She has an 8-month-old daughter. She got married to Ernesto because they got pregnant. They have been married for about a year but have been together for several years on and off.

Ernesto is a 42-year-old man from Houston, Texas, who currently lives in Houston. He completed high school and owns a music promotion company with his brother. He is also a supervisor of chemical production manufacturing. Both his parents completed high school and are both retired. His mother used to be a secretary and his father used to be a mechanic. His family is all from Houston, and his ancestry can be traced back to Mexico. He has two siblings, Victor and Katia. Both have families. He has a son from a previous marriage and a daughter with Nancy, his current wife. His older brother, Victor, was also interviewed for this study (couple 27). He also has a sister, Katia, who is 38 years old.

#26: Bethany and Diego
Houston, TX

Diego's father, Laredo, TX

Diego's Mother, Houston, TX

Bethany's Father, Anchorage, AK

Bethany's mother, Minneapolis, MN

Sister, Richmond, TX

Older Brother

Older brother

Older brother

Ex partner, 34, Houston, TX

Diego, 35 Houston, TX

Bethany, 30 Wasilla, AK

r. 3

Miguel, 4

Couple #26
Bethany is a 30-year-old woman originally from Wasilla, Alaska, who currently resides in Houston, Texas, with one of her closest friends. She has been dating Diego for over three years after they met at a nightclub where Diego was a DJ. Before moving to Houston she had received her bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. Both of her parents are college educated; her mother, originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a librarian and her father, originally from Anchorage, Alaska, is a civil engineer. Bethany has been working in retail since she moved from Alaska to Texas, finding it difficult to find a career in art as she had hoped. She has expressed an interest in becoming a museum curator. She has three older brothers who are very protective of her. She speculates that she is German on both her mother's side and her father's side. As of 2014, Bethany and Diego have had a tumultuous relationship, breaking up and getting back together. It is unclear at this time whether they are a couple or not.

Diego is a 35-year-old man from Houston, Texas, who has lived there his entire life. He has finished high school and works as a property manager/maintenance for an apartment complex during the day and a DJ at a local nightclub during weekend evenings. His mother and father are both of Mexican descent and grew up in Houston. His father provides maintenance for parks throughout the Pasadena, Texas, area and his mother has worked in a variety of jobs, including fast food, retail, and at multiple concert venues, including Reliant Stadium. Both of their families can be traced to different parts of Mexico, including the states of Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Sonora but do not know exact locations. At the time of the interview, his son, Miguel, from a previous relationship, was four years old.
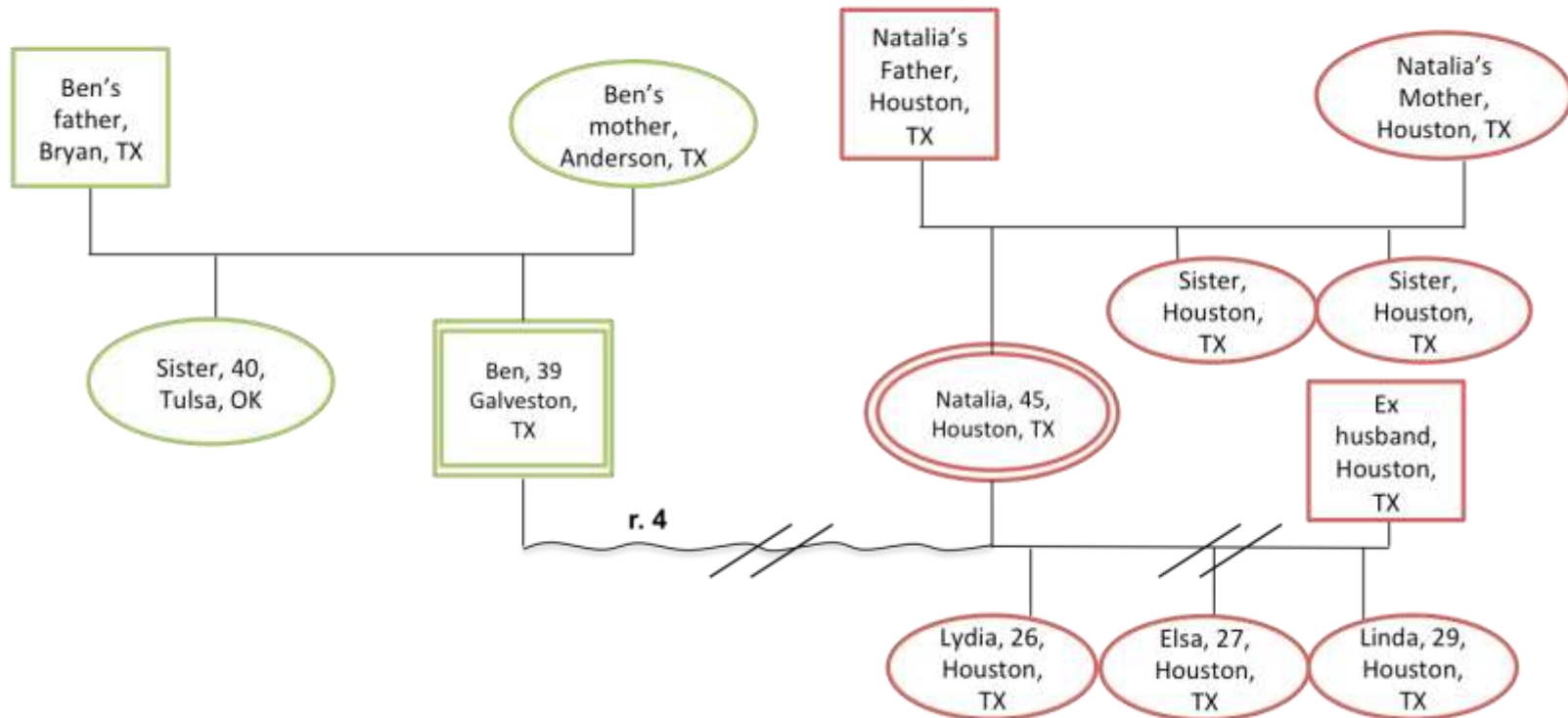
#27: Christine and Victor
Houston, TX
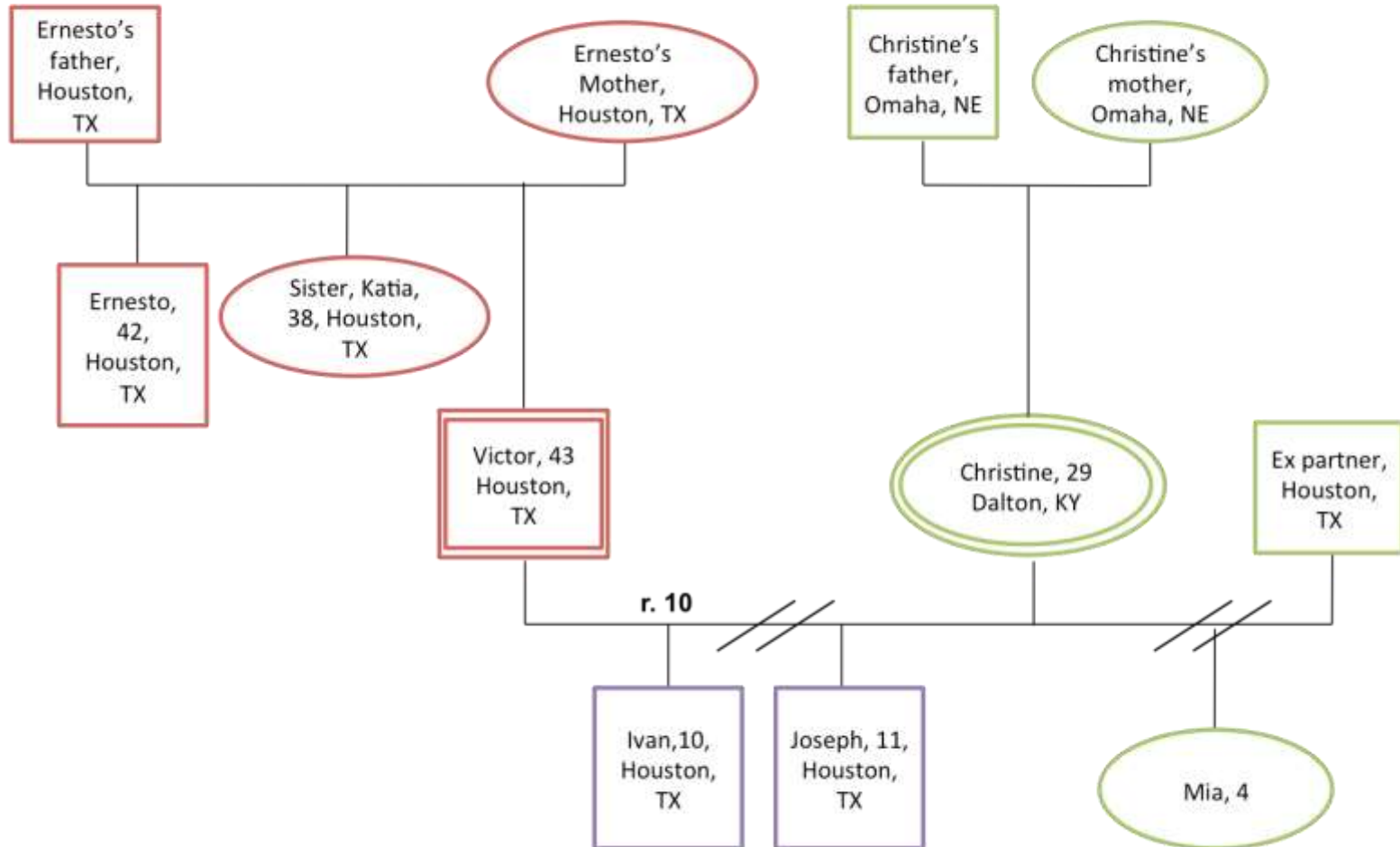
*Note: Since the interview, Christine and Victor have split, although they remain on friendly terms for the sake of the children

Couple #27
Christine is a 29-year-old woman from Dalton, Kentucky, who lives in Houston, Texas. Christine and Victor have had an on-again-off-again relationship for about 11 years (since she was 17-18 years old), which started when they met at the strip club that Victor frequented and that Christine worked at. She never graduated high school and has been working on and off for the last 11-12 years as an exotic dancer. The first year into their relationship, they welcomed their first son, Joseph, and a year later their other son, Ivan. She believes she is of Italian descent. Both of her parents never completed high school and have worked in factories since they were teenagers. During one of the off-again periods of their relationship, Christine had a daughter with her partner at that time.

Victor is a 43-year-old man born in Hondo, Texas, but raised in Houston his entire life. He finished high school and has worked for different telecommunication companies since then. Currently, he works as a business account executive for a major telecommunications company. His parents are both of Mexican descent but grew up in the Houston area. His parents are currently retired. He started a music promotion company a few years ago with his younger brother, Victor, and has involved everyone in his family in the project, including his mom and younger sister, Katia.

#28: Natalia and Ben*
Houston, TX

Ben's father, Bryan, TX

Ben's mother, Anderson, TX

Natalia's Father, Houston, TX

Natalia's Mother, Houston, TX

Sister, Houston, TX

Sister, Houston, TX

Sister, 40, Tulsa, OK

Ben, 39 Galveston, TX

Natalia, 45, Houston, TX

Ex husband, Houston, TX

r. 4

Lydia, 26, Houston, TX

Elsa, 27, Houston, TX
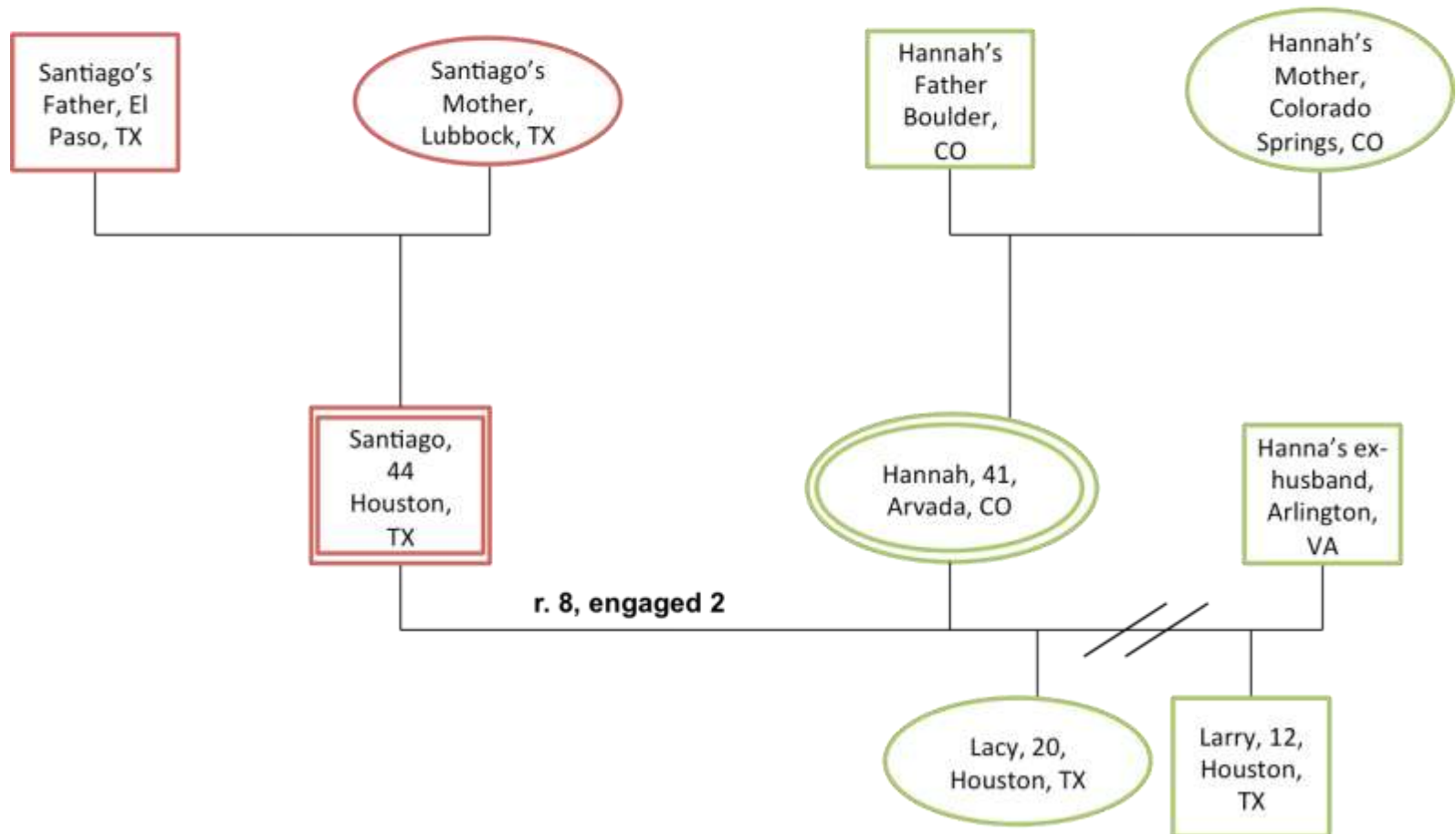
Linda, 29, Houston, TX

* Note: Since the interview, Ben and Natalia have broken up.

310

Couple #28

Natalia is a 45-year-old woman born and raised in Houston, Texas. She finished high school and has worked an assortment of odd jobs. Most recently, she has been employed as a business and corporate real estate agent. She has three daughters from her first marriage and six grandchildren. She has two sisters. Her mom has a high school education and worked as a caterer and event planner while her father worked in leisure and hospitality (she did not specify any more than this). At the time of the interview, she and Ben had been together for four years but as of the end of 2013 had broken up. She married her new partner a few months later.

Ben is a 39-year-old man originally from Burleson, Texas, but residing in Houston for about 18 years. He completed high school, was in jail for about a year for distribution and sale of drugs and paraphernalia, and worked in retail for about 14 of the 18 years he has been in Houston. He recently changed professions and is working on computer and network certifications to increase his upward mobility. His parents have been divorced for a long time and have each remarried. On his father's side he says he is Native American and on his mother's side he believes he is Irish. His mother is originally from League City, Texas, but lives in Hearne, Texas, and she works as a truck driver throughout the state. His father is from Bryan, Texas, and continues to reside there. Since breaking up with Natalia, he has been unpartnered, having difficulty finding a stable relationship between his excessive work hours and studying for his certifications.

#29: Hannah and Santiago
Houston, TX

Santiago's Father, El Paso, TX

Santiago's Mother, Lubbock, TX

Hannah's Father Boulder, CO

Hannah's Mother, Colorado Springs, CO

Santiago, 44 Houston, TX

Hannah, 41, Arvada, CO

Hanna's ex-husband, Arlington, VA

r. 8, engaged 2

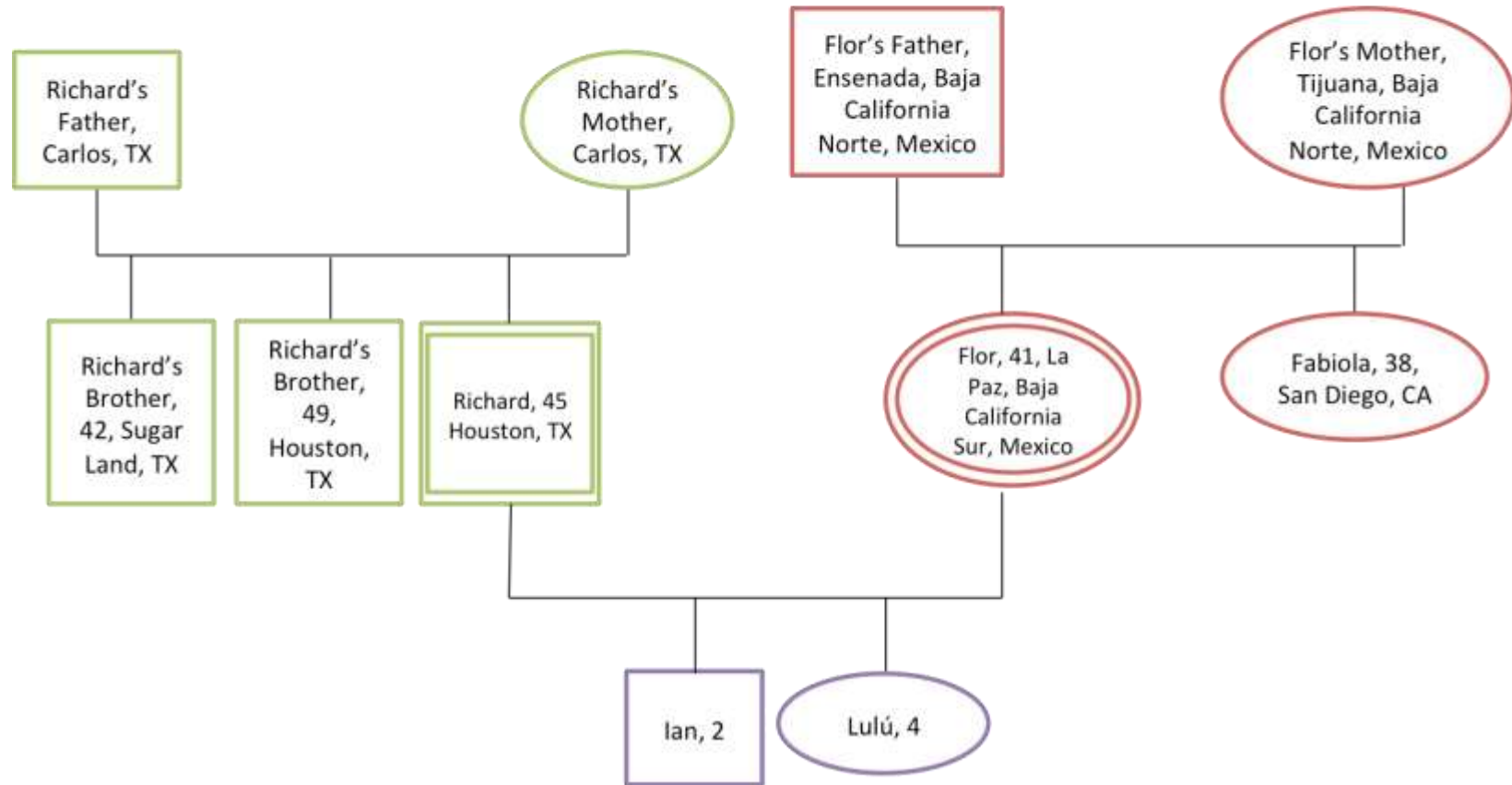Lacy, 20, Houston, TX

Larry, 12, Houston, TX

Couple #29
Hannah is a 41-year-old woman from Arvada, Colorado, who has lived in Houston, Texas, the majority of her adult life having moved there with her ex-husband for his job. She has a 20-year-old daughter, Lacy, and a 12-year-old son, from that previous marriage. She has a bachelor's degree and works as an interior designer. She is of English descent on both sides of her family. Her parents are also college educated and used to own their own business in Colorado Springs, Colorado, until they retired. She has been in a relationship with Santiago for 8 years and they have been engaged for 2.

Santiago is a 44-year-old man from Houston, Texas, who has lived there for most of his life, excluding the 4 years he was in college. He attended the University of Texas at Austin majoring in design. He currently works as a photographer. His mother is originally from Lubbock, Texas, and his father is from El Paso, Texas, both of who have family of Mexican descent originating in the Texas area. They are both high school educated and have worked in food service all of their lives. He has never been married and does not have any children.

#30: Flor and Richard
Houston, TX

Richard's Father, Carlos, TX

Richard's Mother, Carlos, TX

Flor's Father, Ensenada, Baja California Norte, Mexico

Flor's Mother, Tijuana, Baja California Norte, Mexico

Richard's Brother, 42, Sugar Land, TX

Richard's Brother, 49, Houston, TX

Richard, 45 Houston, TX

Flor, 41, La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico

Fabiola, 38, San Diego, CA

Ian, 2

Lulú, 4

Couple #30

Flor is a 41-year-old woman from La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico. After graduating with a law degree from a university in Mexico, Flor found it difficult to find employment and started working as a secretary at a lawyer's office. While in attendance of a legal conference in Mexico City with her boss, she met Richard who was a panelist at the conference. They immediately hit it off and started a long-distance relationship with both traveling back and forth to see one another. In 1999 Richard asked Flor to marry him and they married in Mexico soon after. Being a lawyer specializing in immigration, Richard petitioned for her to become a legal permanent resident, which she was fully granted 2-3 years later. At that time, she quit her job as a legal secretary and migrated to Houston, Texas, to finally be with her husband. She worked as his secretary for several years before becoming a paralegal. They have two children, Ian, 2, and Lulú, 4.

Richard is a 45-year-old man from Houston, Texas. He attended Texas A&M University and obtained a bachelor's degree in History. He later attended the University of Texas at Austin where he obtained his Juris Doctor (J.D.). His parents are from Carlos, Texas, but lived in Houston, Texas, for most of their adult lives. His father worked in the oil industry and his mother was a stay at home mom. They moved back to Carlos after they retired. Richard currently practices immigration law primarily in the Houston area but has traveled throughout rural areas to serve the Latin@ population in immigration needs. He also participates in informational sessions with the purpose of ensuring that Latin@s in the community are not ripped off by money-hungry, abusive lawyers who make thousands of dollars off of the immigrant population. He is fluent in Spanish, having studied abroad several times in multiple countries in Latin America.

#31: Brenda and Eduardo
Brazos County, TX
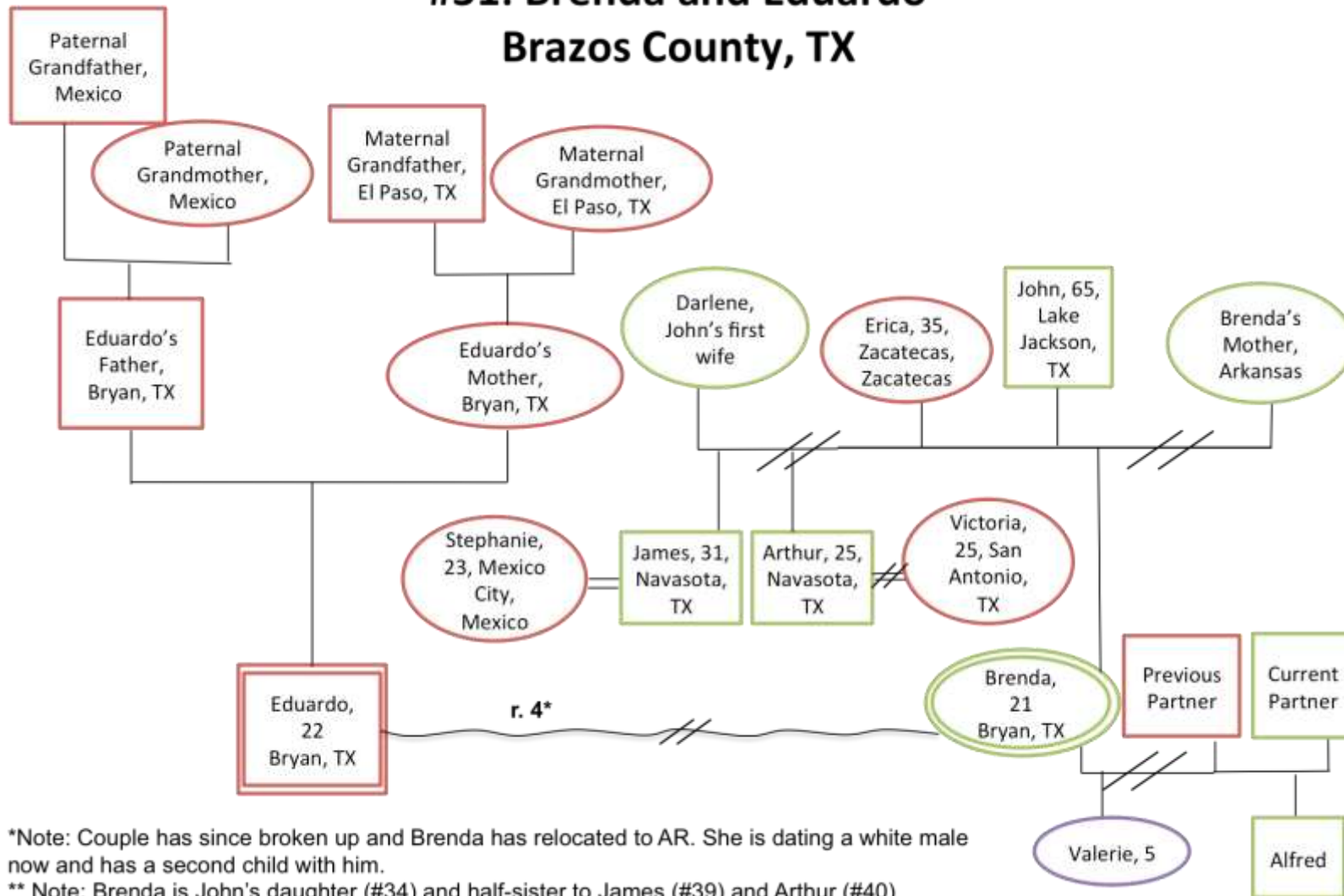
*Note: Couple has since broken up and Brenda has relocated to AR. She is dating a white male now and has a second child with him.
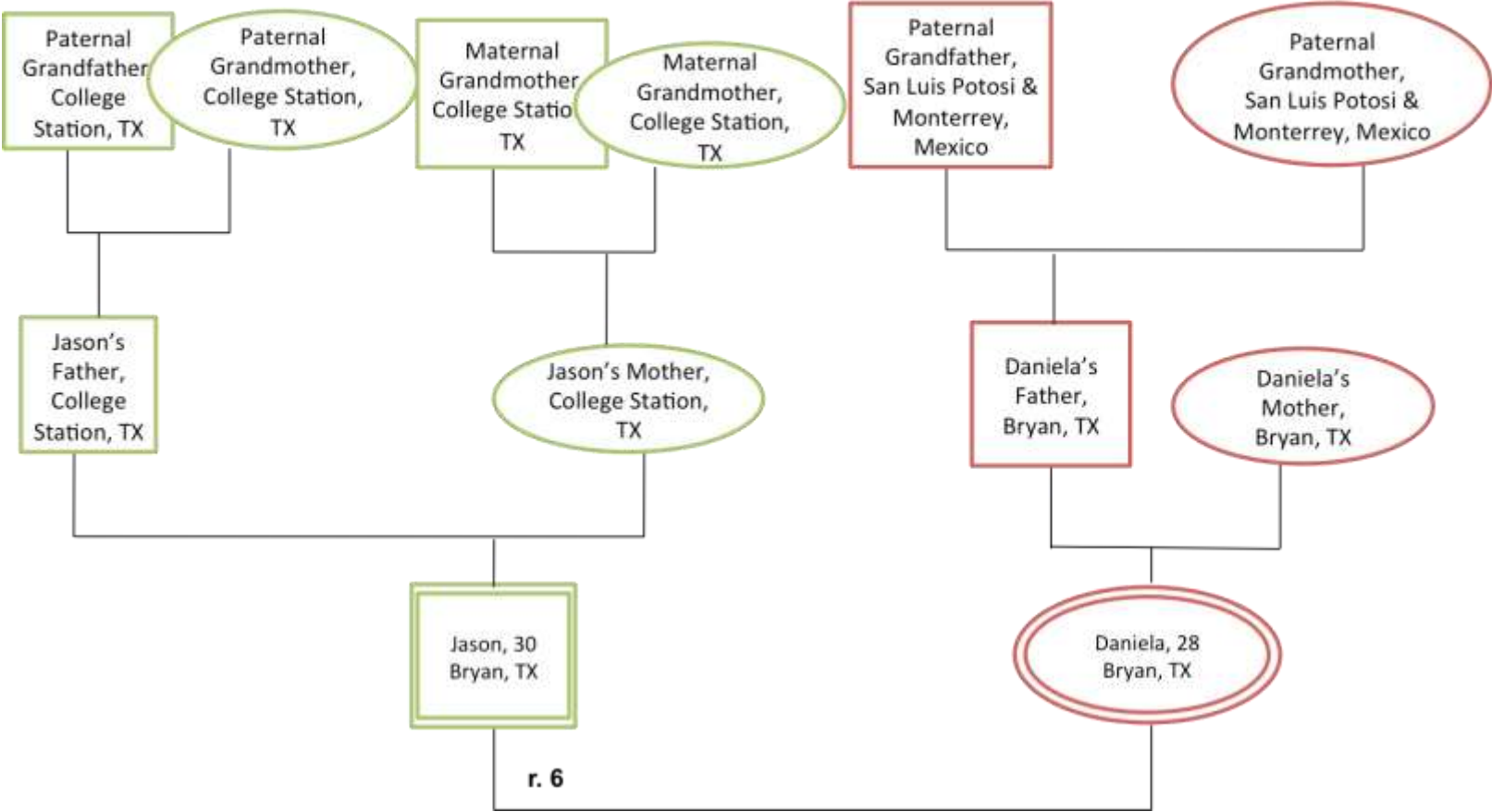** Note: Brenda is John's daughter (#34) and half-sister to James (#39) and Arthur (#40)

316

Couple #31

Brenda is a 21-year-old woman from Little Rock, Arkansas. At the time of this interview she lived in Brazos County with her partner, Eduardo. Since then, she and Eduardo have broken up and she has returned to Arkansas where she is now in a relationship with a white man with whom she has a son. Additionally, at the time of this interview, she had recently completed high school and was working in fast food, but since moving to Arkansas has started studying at a community college with a goal of becoming a nurse someday. She has contemplated returning to the Brazos County area to be closer to her dad and her bothers, as well as attending Blinn Community College. Both of her parents completed high school and her mother was a stay at home mom and her father is a contractor. Her father's side of the family is from Lake Jackson, Texas, but lives in Bryan, Texas and her mother's side of the family is from Arkansas. She is unsure of her father's ancestry. Her mother's side of the family is German. Her mother is a recovering alcoholic and drug abuser. Brenda does not frequent her mother because of this. She has a daughter named Valerie that is 5 years old, from a previous relationship. Brenda's father is John (Couple #34). She has two older brothers, James (Coule #39) and Arthur (Couple #40).

Eduardo is a 22-year-old man born in Bryan, Texas. At the time of the interview he still resided in the Brazos County area but since then has relocated to Houston. He completed high school. His parents also completed high school. His mother cleans houses and has also worked as a waitress and his father worked as a cook. His grandparents on his father's side of the family are from Mexico. His mother's side of the family is from El Paso but are of Mexican descent. His parents worked several jobs when he was younger, so his grandparents took care of him and his siblings. At the time of the interview, he was living with Brenda and her daughter, Valerie.

#32: Daniela and Jason
Brazos County, TX

Paternal Grandfather College Station, TX

Paternal Grandmother, College Station, TX

Maternal Grandmother College Station TX

Maternal Grandmother, College Station, TX

Paternal Grandfather, San Luis Potosi & Monterrey, Mexico

Paternal Grandmother, San Luis Potosi & Monterrey, Mexico

Jason's Father, College Station, TX

Jason's Mother, College Station, TX

Daniela's Father, Bryan, TX

Daniela's Mother, Bryan, TX
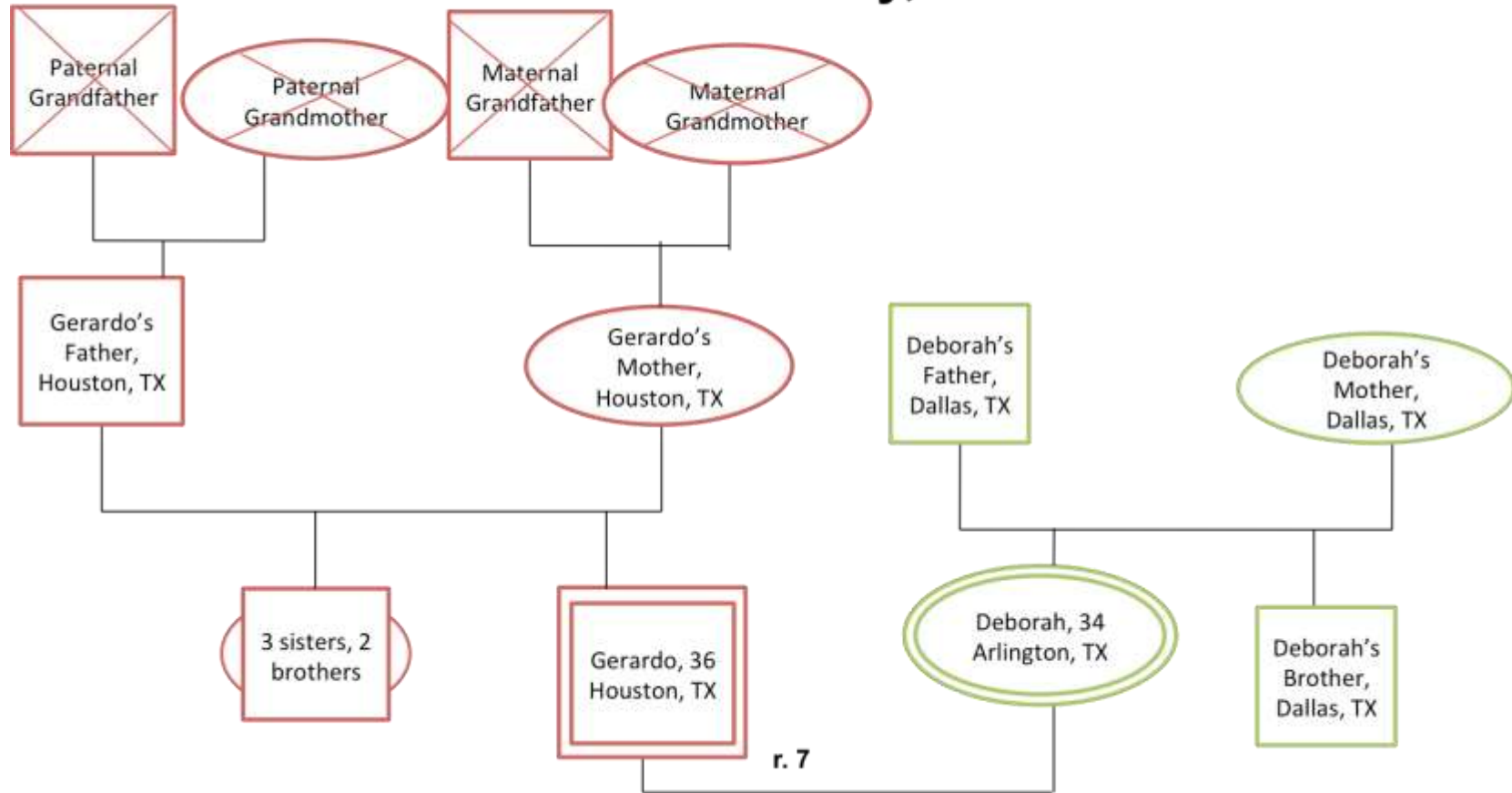
Jason, 30 Bryan, TX

Daniela, 28 Bryan, TX

r. 6

318

Couple #32

Daniela is a 28-year-old woman from Bryan, Texas, who to this day continues to lives there. She completed high school and works a bank teller. Both of her parents finished high school and her mother worked as a housekeeper and her father worked as a janitor at Blinn Community College. Her parents are also from Bryan, Texas although her grandparents migrated from San Luis Potosi, San Luis Potosi, and Monterrey, Nuevo León. They met in Bryan when the schools were segregated by neighborhood racial makeup. They attended an all-Mexican school. Daniela has siblings, but quantity and gender is not specified.

Jason is a 30-year-old male from College Station, Texas, and still resides in the area. He has a bachelor's degree in business and works as a manager at one of the McDonald's in the area. Both of his parents completed high school. His mother was a caretaker and his father was a mechanic. His family is of Irish and German background. He comes from a legacy of military veterans. He, to the family's dismay, did not enlist in the military. He met Daniela at the bank where she works. His occupation is not listed and it is not clear if he has any siblings.

#33: Deborah and Gerardo
Brazos County, TX

Paternal Grandfather · Paternal Grandmother · Maternal Grandfather · Maternal Grandmother

Gerardo's Father, Houston, TX · Gerardo's Mother, Houston, TX · Deborah's Father, Dallas, TX · Deborah's Mother, Dallas, TX

3 sisters, 2 brothers · Gerardo, 36 Houston, TX · Deborah, 34 Arlington, TX · Deborah's Brother, Dallas, TX
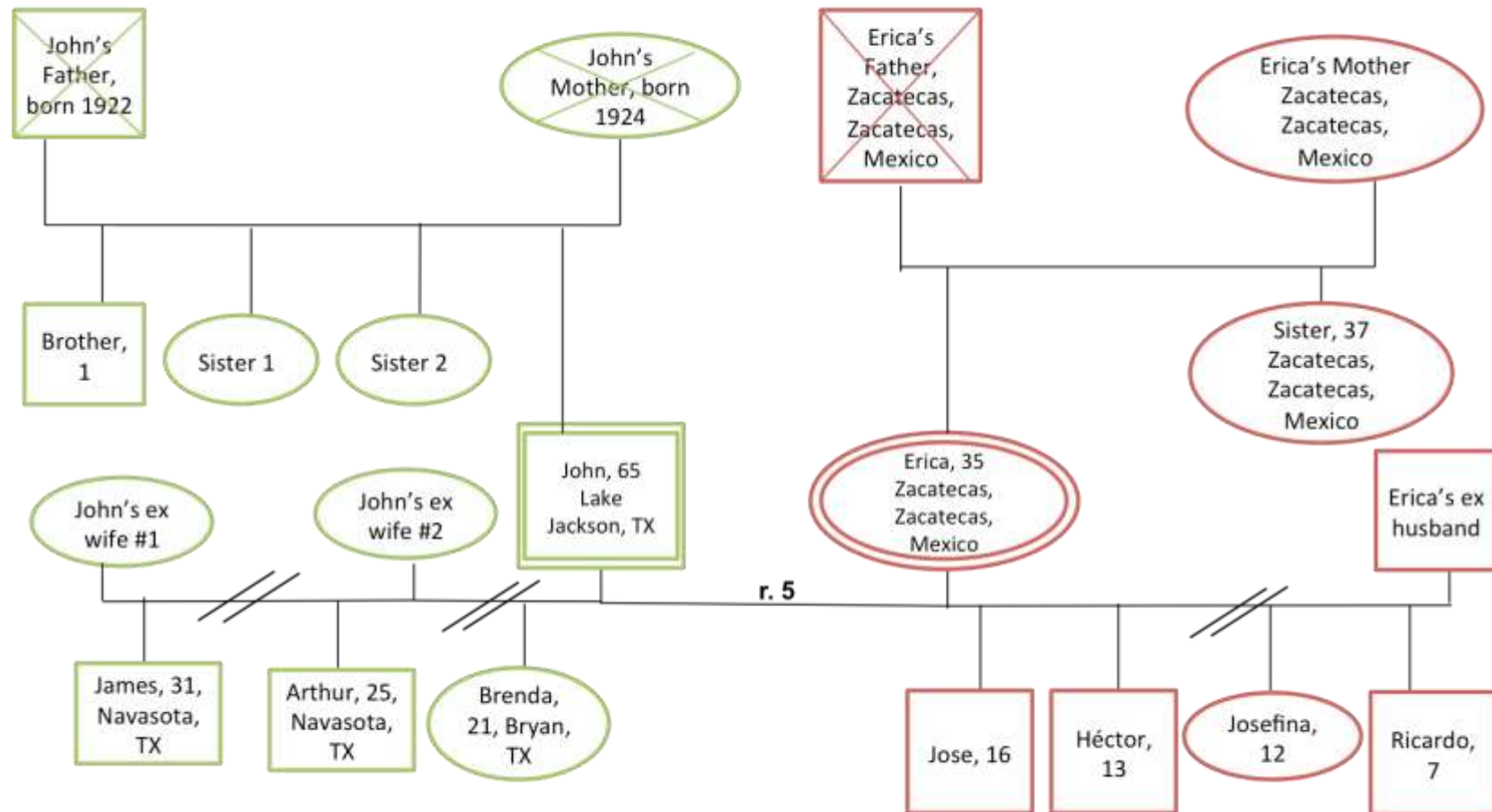
r. 7

Note: Parents are academics and business owners.

Couple #33

Deborah is a 34-year-old woman from Arlington, Texas, who currently lives in Brazos County. She has a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University and is Certified Public Accountant (CPA). She is also considering getting a master's degree, but doesn't find it completely necessary at this point. Her mother has a master's degree and her father has a Ph.D. Her mother attended the University of Texas at Austin and her father went to the University of North Texas. Both worked as instructors/professors at the University of Texas – Arlington. Her mother's family is of German descent, but she is not sure if Austria is also included in her ancestry. Her parents are from Dallas, Texas. She has a brother.

Gerardo is a 36-year-old man from Houston, Texas who currently lives in Brazos County. He has a master's degree and is also an accountant. His mother completed high school and his father has a bachelor's degree in business. Both of his parents started working for a cleaning company (because of their legal status) and they eventually started their own cleaning company once they obtained amnesty through the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. Both of Gerardo's parents immigrated to Houston at a young age and consider it their home despite their lack of legal status growing up. Both of their families are from the Ciudad Juarez area. Gerardo is the oldest of his siblings (3 sisters and 2 brothers). Gerardo and Deborah met while working together and eventually married and decided to start their own business.

#34: Erica and John
Brazos County, TX

John's Father, born 1922

John's Mother, born 1924

Erica's Father, Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico

Erica's Mother Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico

Brother, 1

Sister 1

Sister 2

Sister, 37 Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico

John's ex wife #1

John's ex wife #2

John, 65 Lake Jackson, TX

Erica, 35 Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico

Erica's ex husband

r. 5

James, 31, Navasota, TX

Arthur, 25, Navasota, TX

Brenda, 21, Bryan, TX

Jose, 16

Héctor, 13

Josefina, 12

Ricardo, 7

Note: John's children, James (#38), Arthur (#40) and Brenda (#31) have also been interviewed for this project
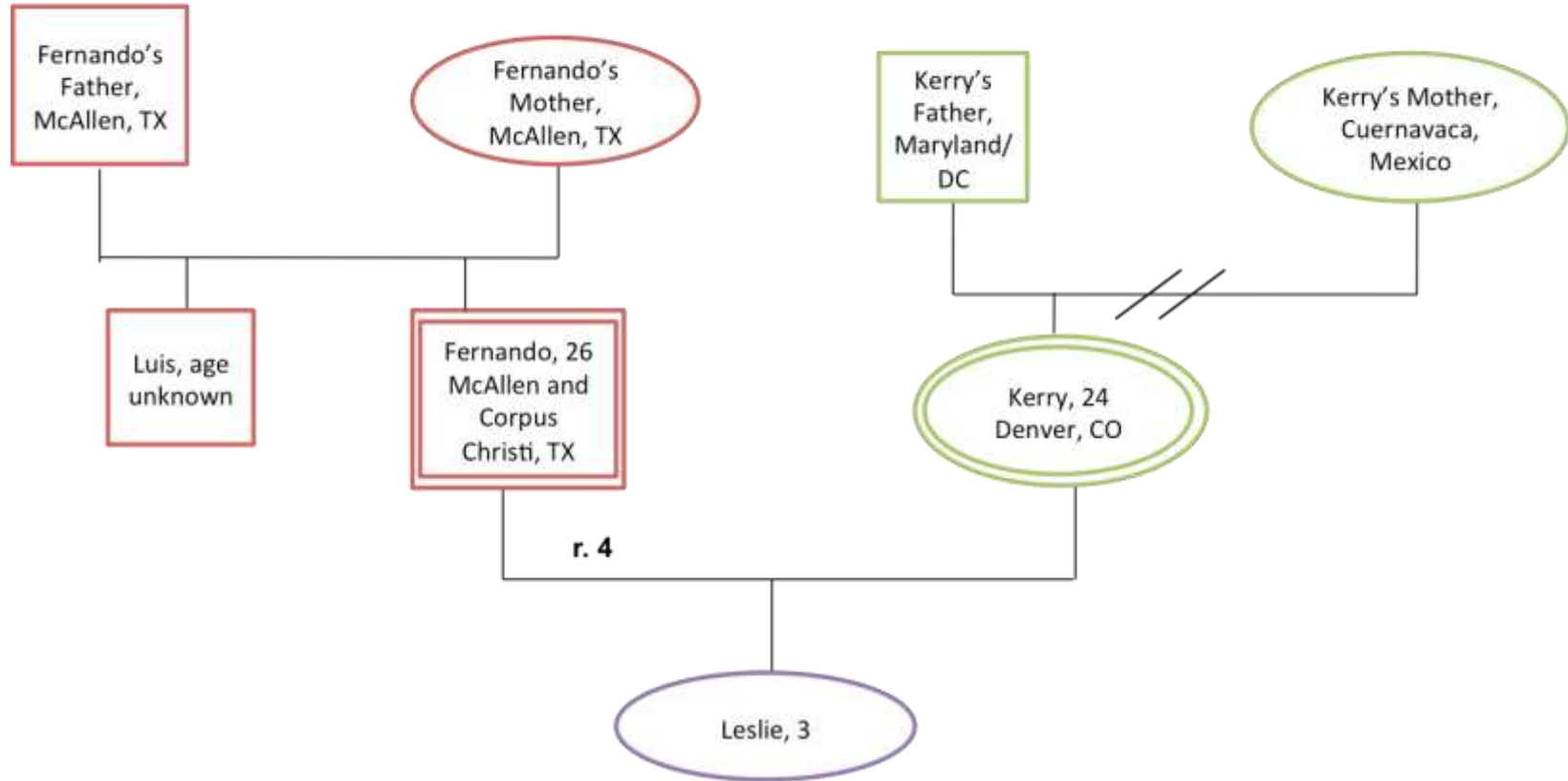
322

Couple #34

Erica is a 35-year-old woman from Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico, who currently resides in Brazos County with her partner of 5 years, John. She does not have any educational degrees, completing middle school as her highest educational level. She has been a housewife for most of her life but since the interview has gained employment as a domestic worker in a private home. Her mother finished third grade and was also a housewife. Her father studied up to sixth grade and worked as a miner. Her mother's side of the family was from Zacatecas, and little is known about her father's family. He died when she was about 6-7 years old shortly after her youngest brother was born. Her mother never remarried but she did live with a man, Don Paco, who was the fatherly figure of the household. Erica has four children, Jose (16), Héctor (13), Josefina (12), and Ricardo (7) from a previous marriage and they live in Houston with their dad. She immigrated to the United States with the help of a *coyote* (smuggler) when she was 16 years old with her 14-year-old sister to look for employment to help their family. Erica has crossed the border 3 times and has been deported twice.

John is a 65-year-old man originally from Lake Jackson, Texas. He lives in Brazos County. He completed high school and works in construction and electrical contracting. His mother finished sixth grade and was a housewife. His father finished high school, enlisted in the army and also worked in construction. He thinks his ancestry is Irish Catholic, but is not sure. He has one brother and two sisters who he does not see very often. His sisters are younger and he and his brother are the oldest. He served in the Vietnam War. He has two sons, James (couple 39) and Arthur (couple 40) from his first marriage, and a daughter, Brenda (couple 31), from the marriage prior to his relationship with Erica. He has been divorced three times and has two grandchildren through his daughter Brenda (couple 31).

#35: Kerry and Fernando
Brazos County, TX

Fernando's Father, McAllen, TX

Fernando's Mother, McAllen, TX

Kerry's Father, Maryland/DC

Kerry's Mother, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Luis, age unknown

Fernando, 26 McAllen and Corpus Christi, TX

Kerry, 24 Denver, CO

r. 4

Leslie, 3

Couple #35

Kerry is a 24-year –old woman from Denver, Colorado. She lives in Brazos County. She has completed high school and hopes to complete a bachelor's degree soon. She has a work-study job at the library. Her biological mother is from Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico and her stepmother is white. Her biological mother has a Ph.D. in psychology and her stepmother has a bachelor's degree. Her biological mother is a psychologist and researcher. Her stepmom is an insurance agent. Her father has a master's degree in British Literature and is a high school English teacher. Her father's family is of English descent and are originally from the Maryland/DC area. Her parents married in California but divorced when she was an infant, remarrying within a few years of that divorce. She has a half sister, Julie, through her father and stepmother. She has a three-year-old daughter, Leslie, with her partner, Fernando.

Fernando is a 26-year-old man from McAllen, Texas. He currently resides in Brazos County. He has a bachelor's degree and is at Texas A&M University working towards his Ph.D while currently working as a graduate assistant. His mother graduated high school, married his father and became a housewife. His father is a dentist, having obtained a bachelor's degree in Biology (pre-Med) and later studying dentistry. His parents are from McAllen, Texas, and his grandparents are from Mexico. He has moved back and forth between Brownsville and Corpus Christi. He has a daughter, Leslie, with his partner, Kerry.
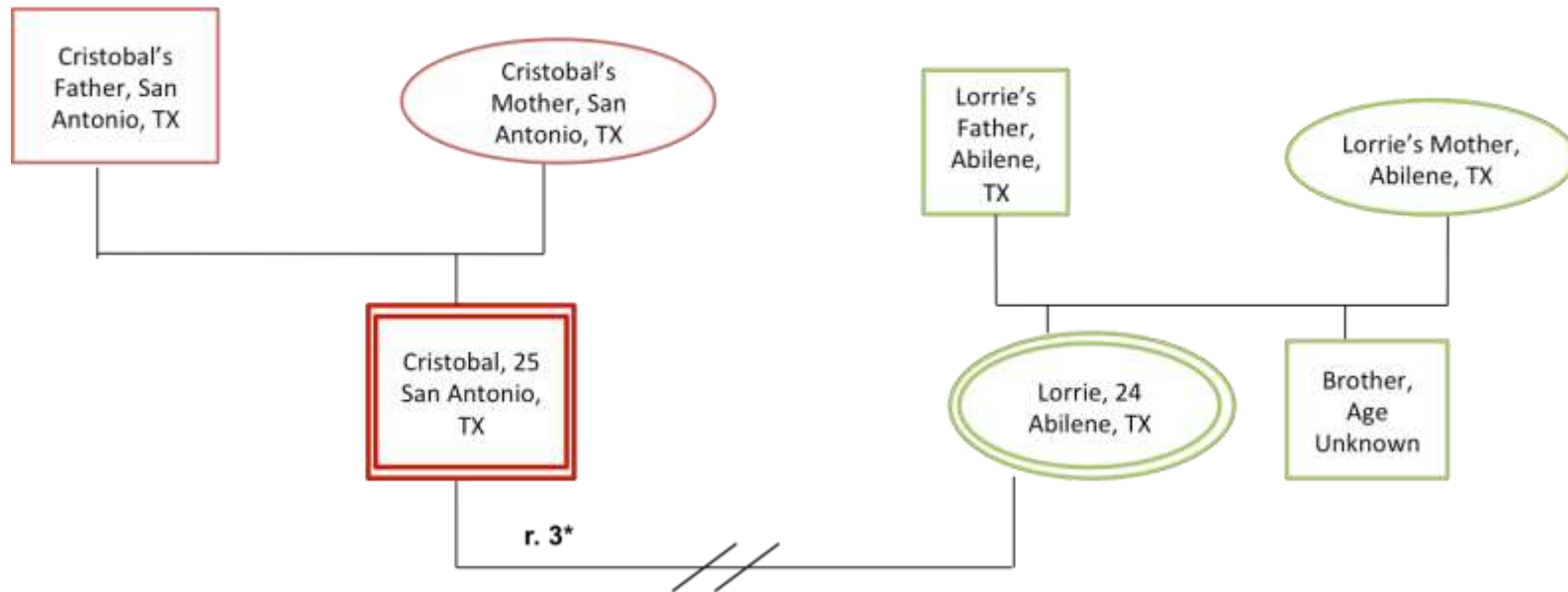
#36: Juana and Mark
Brazos County, TX
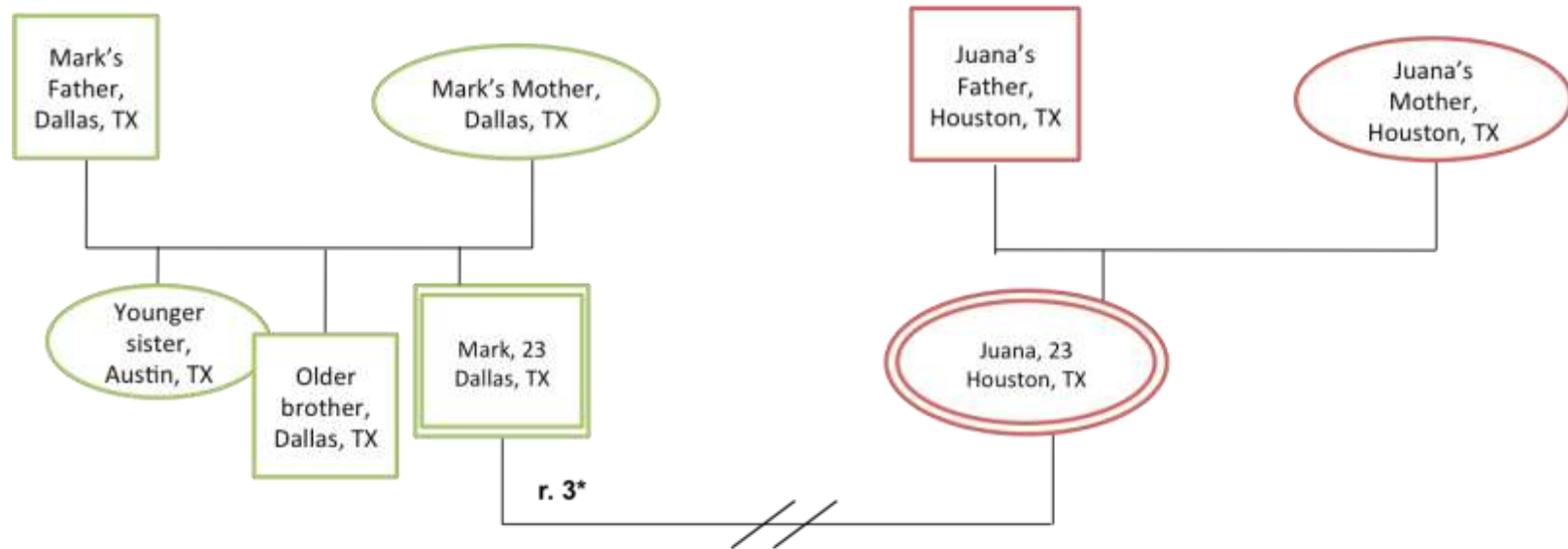
Note: At the time of the interview, Mark was transitioning from an undergraduate student to a graduate student. He is now in his fourth year of graduate school (he took a year off from graduate school). In the process of pursuing his doctorate, he and Juana have broken up. Mark is now engaged to a white female from the Dallas area {who has relocated to DC to live with him) and Juana is living back home (haven't been able to get a hold of her for an update).

Couple #36

Juana is a 23-year-old woman from Houston, Texas who currently lives in Brazos County. She has a bachelor's degree and at the time of the interview was transitioning to her first year in the public policy master's program and has expressed interest in pursuing a Ph.D. She is currently transitioning to becoming a graduate student, graduate assistant, and will occasionally work at the business school. Her mother finished high school and was a secretary at a middle school. Her father has a bachelor's degree and he was a bank manager. Her parents and grandparents are from Houston, Texas, and her great grandparents were from Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. She has been living in College Station for 4 years.

Mark is a 23-year-old man from Dallas, Texas and currently lives in Brazos County. He recently received a bachelor's degree and was accepted to a top research university on the east coast to pursue his master's and Ph.D. in the social sciences. He is currently working as a barista at a coffee shop. Both of his parents have bachelor's degrees. His mother is an artist and his father is a business owner. His family is of German descent, but has no records to trace his lineage any further.

#37: Lorrie and Cristobal
Brazos County, TX

Cristobal's Father, San Antonio, TX

Cristobal's Mother, San Antonio, TX

Lorrie's Father, Abilene, TX

Lorrie's Mother, Abilene, TX

Cristobal, 25 San Antonio, TX

Lorrie, 24 Abilene, TX
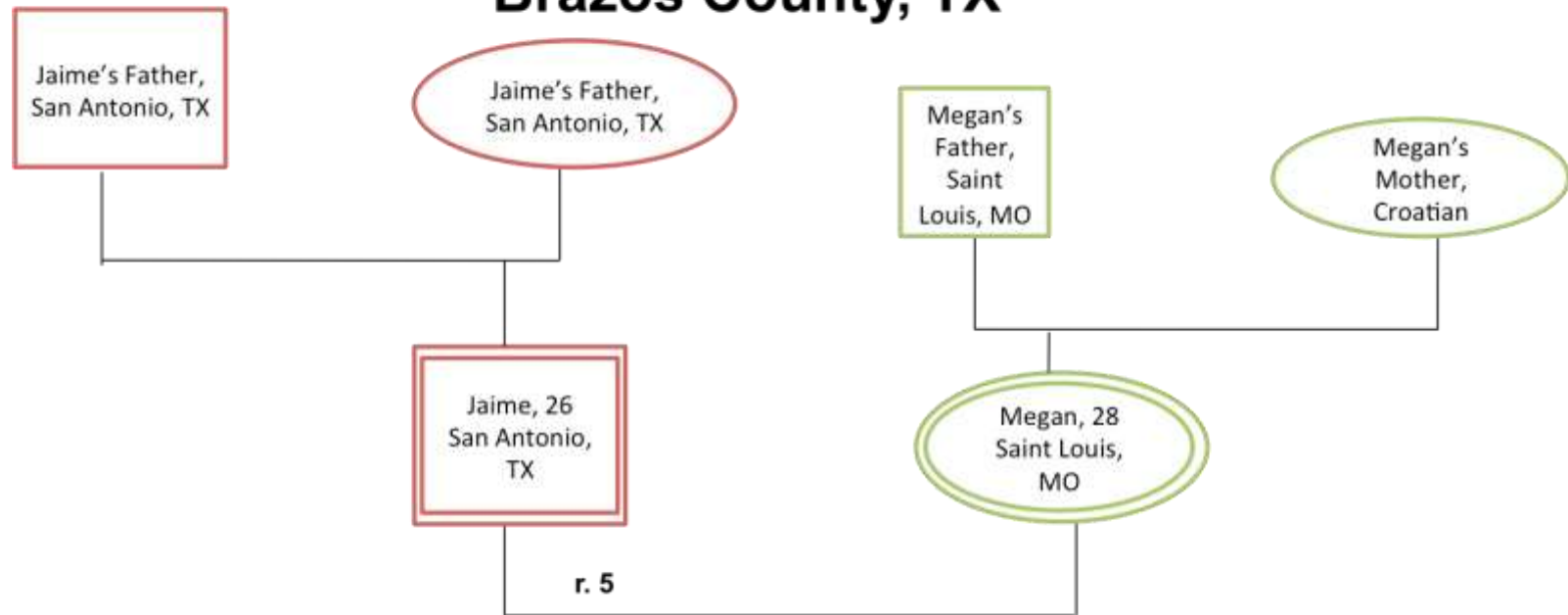
Brother, Age Unknown

r. 3*

Note: Couple was interviewed in 2009 and split up in 2012.

Couple #37

Lorrie is a 24-year-old woman from Abilene, Texas. She lives in Brazos County and at the time of her interview was working towards completing her bachelor's degree in Communications from Texas A&M University. She works for the local radio station. Both of her parents completed high school. Her mother works at a church doing miscellaneous things and her father is the district manager of the Wal-Mart in the Abilene area. Her grandparents from her father's side migrated from Germany and her mother's side is Irish. All of her family lives in Abilene. Her grandparents on her mother's side died before she was born, and her grandparents on her father's side died when she was in high school. They originally arrived in Fredericksburg but were dissatisfied with the area and decided to move to Abilene. She has one brother who has been in and out of jail for drugs.

Cristobal is a 25-year-old male from San Antonio, Texas who currently lives in Brazos County with his partner, Lorrie. They have been living together for about a year. He has a bachelor's degree from St. Edwards's University and is a radio DJ. His mother completed high school and was a secretary. His father has a bachelor's degree and works as a business manager. His family is from San Antonio, of Mexican descent and it is speculated that his family has been in San Antonio since before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. He has brothers who are following his footsteps and going to college. He has always dated white women.

#38: Megan and Jaime
Brazos County, TX

Jaime's Father, San Antonio, TX

Jaime's Father, San Antonio, TX

Megan's Father, Saint Louis, MO

Megan's Mother, Croatian

Jaime, 26 San Antonio, TX

Megan, 28 Saint Louis, MO

r. 5

Note: While Jaime was finishing his Ph.D., Megan returned to school to obtain a Master's in Public Health. They have since relocated to the Midwest where Jaime has secured a tenure-track job.
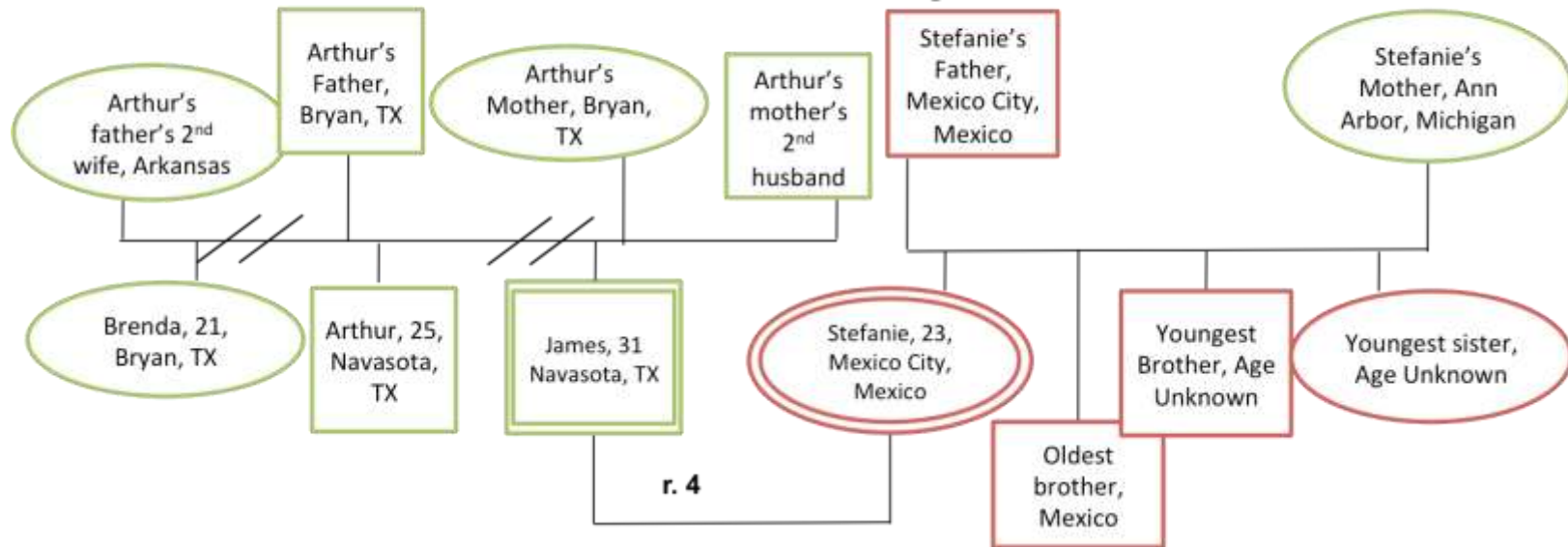
Couple #38

Megan is a 28-year-old woman from St. Louis, Missouri. She lives in Brazos County and works for a nonprofit organization that helps domestically abused women organizing volunteers. She is considering going back to school to get her master's and Ph.D. Her mother has a bachelor's degree and is a math teacher. Her father graduated from high school and is a train engineer. She is of Croatian descent on her mother's side and British on her father's side. Her grandmother on her mother's side fled old Yugoslavia when civil unrest was breaking out and migrated to the United States. She is an only child. Before moving to Brazos County with her partner, Jaime, she lived in Missouri, Nebraska, Illinois, and Oklahoma.

Jaime is a 28-year-old man born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. He currently lives in Brazos County and is finishing up his Ph.D. at Texas A&M University. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree from a university in Chicago, Illinois. He currently works as a graduate assistant. His father has a bachelor's in business and is a business consultant. His mother has a degree in nursing and works as a nurse. His parents are from San Antonio as well, and are fervent Chicano activists. His father was a part of the Brown Berets. His family is of Mexican descent. His parents were constantly going to California to help during the Chicano Movement. His parents met César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and Corky Gonzáles.

#39: Stefanie and James
Brazos County, TX

Arthur's father's 2nd wife, Arkansas

Arthur's Father, Bryan, TX

Arthur's Mother, Bryan, TX

Arthur's mother's 2nd husband

Stefanie's Father, Mexico City, Mexico

Stefanie's Mother, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Brenda, 21, Bryan, TX

Arthur, 25, Navasota, TX

James, 31 Navasota, TX

Stefanie, 23, Mexico City, Mexico

Youngest Brother, Age Unknown

Youngest sister, Age Unknown

Oldest brother, Mexico

r. 4

Couple #39

Stephanie is a 28-year-old woman from Mexico City, Mexico. She has a bachelor's degree, is currently working on her master's degree, and will most likely obtain a Ph.D. as well. Her mother has a Ph.D. and has always been involved in academia as a researcher, professor and adviser. Stephanie's father has a master's degree and is a civil engineer for PEMEX. Her mother is from Ann Arbor Michigan and her father is from Mexico City, but she considers herself Mexican based on her upbringing in Mexico and her close family ties in Mexico. She is now in Michigan working with the children of undocumented and documented immigrants. All of her siblings were born in Mexico City. Her older brother obtained his undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan and is currently studying medicine at UNAM. Her younger brother is working in Michigan and her younger sister is at Princeton on a scholarship. Her grandparents are from Veracruz and most of her family from her father's side is in Veracruz and Tabasco. She has lived in Michigan, Mexico, China, San Francisco, and finally, College Station.

James is a 36-year-old man from Navasota, Texas has lived in the Brazos County/Brazos Valley area for most of his life. He completed high school and does network and tech support. Both of his parents also finished high school. His mother works for the city of Bryan and his father is a construction/electrical contractor. He knows very little of his family background. His grandparents were born in the United States and he is Irish Catholic but he does not identify with it. He has a brother (also interviewed for this project). His parents are divorced and his they have each remarried. He lived in Arkansas with his father for a brief period time.
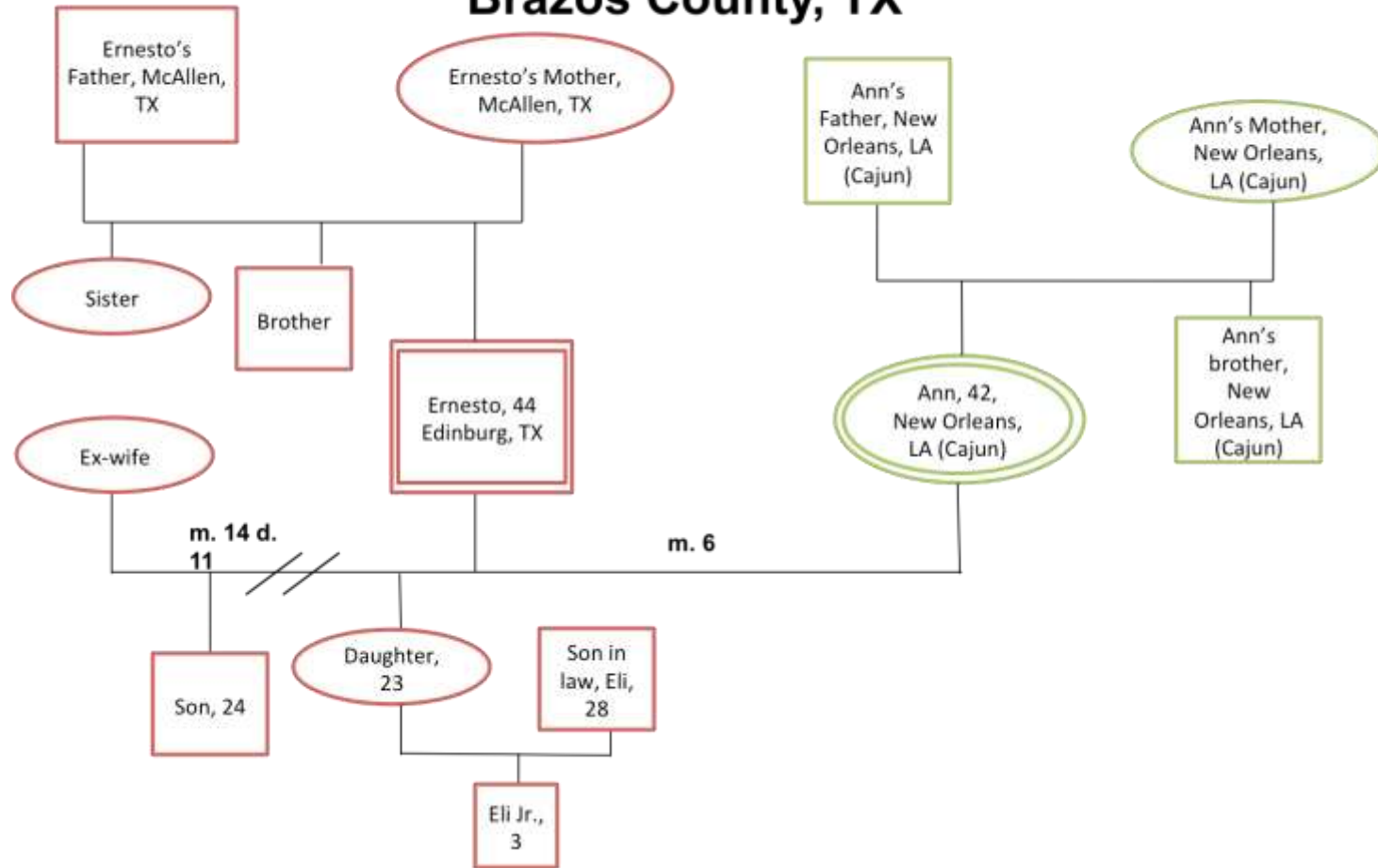
#40: Victoria and Arthur
Brazos County, TX
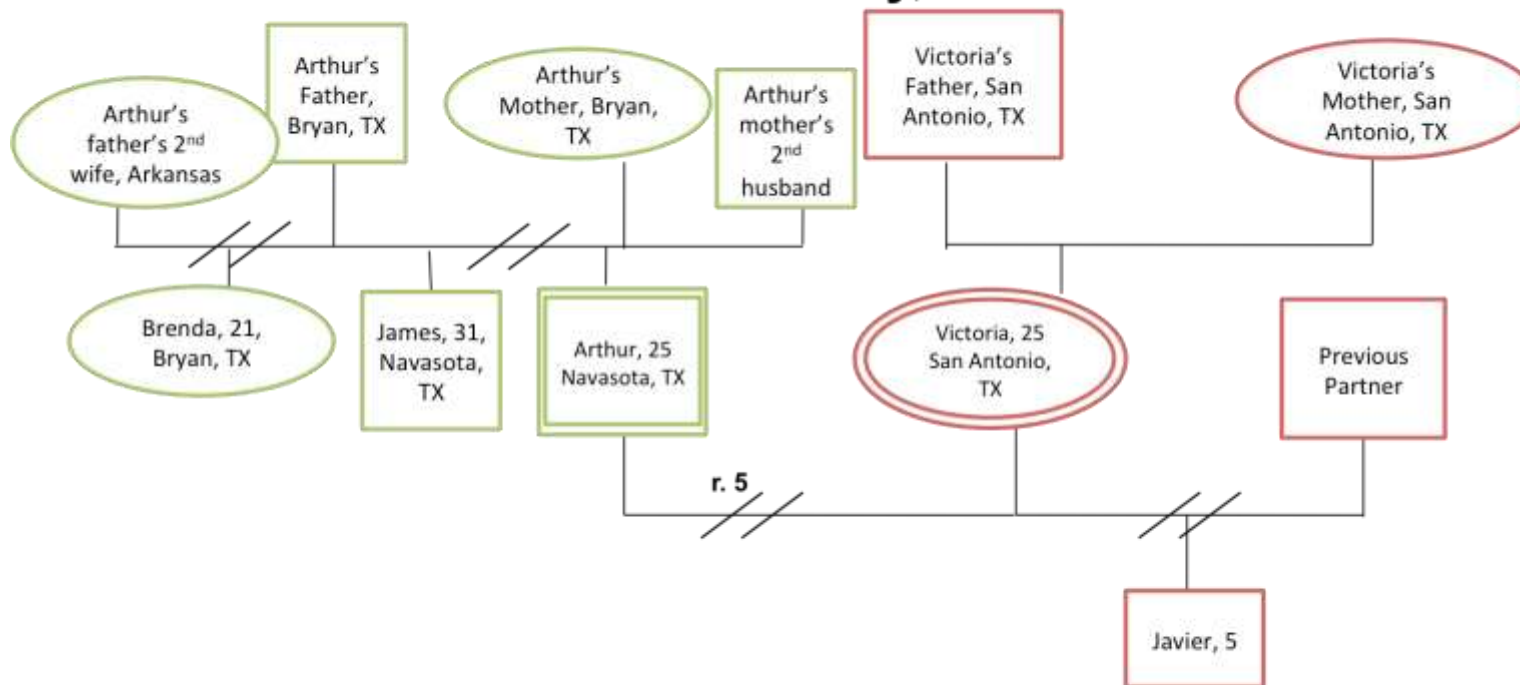
Note: Since their interview in 2010, Arthur and Victoria are no longer together. Victoria is currently dating a white man from Houston, TX, who she plans on marrying in the next year. Arthur has had several relationships since his relationship with Victoria, and is currently cohabitating with his current partner, a white woman from Caldwell, TX.

Couple #40
Victoria is a 25-year-old woman from San Antonio, Texas. She lives in Brazos County where she has lived for a few years. She has completed high school and is currently working on her bachelor's degree in business. She works at a gas station convenience store. Both of her parents also completed high school and her mother works as an administrative assistant and her father works for the army as a recruiter. Her family is also from San Antonio and is of Spanish descent. She has a son, Javier, from a previous relationship.

Arthur is a 30-year-old male from Navasota, Texas. He lives in Brazos County. He completed high school and is a telecommunications technician. Both of his parents completed high school as well and his father works in construction and his mother works at the local jail. He believes his family is of Irish descent based off his last name, but considers himself American. Most of his family lives in Texas. He has an older brother, James, who is also part of this study. His parents are divorced and have both remarried. They still maintain a friendly relationship with each other. He was in the Army for a while and lived in North Carolina for basic training. He has worked as a networking contractor and has temporarily lived in Denver, New York, Chicago, and different parts of Texas. He is Javier's stepfather.

#41: Ann and Jorge
Brazos County, TX

Ernesto's Father, McAllen, TX

Ernesto's Mother, McAllen, TX

Ann's Father, New Orleans, LA (Cajun)

Ann's Mother, New Orleans, LA (Cajun)

Sister

Brother

Ann's brother, New Orleans, LA (Cajun)

Ernesto, 44 Edinburg, TX

Ann, 42, New Orleans, LA (Cajun)

Ex-wife

m. 14 d. 11

m. 6

Son, 24

Daughter, 23

Son in law, Eli, 28

Eli Jr., 3

336

Couple #41

Ann is a 42-year-old woman from New Orleans, Louisiana, residing in Bryan, Texas, with her husband of 6 years, Ernesto. She has a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology from Texas A&M University and currently works as an adjunct faculty member at a university. Additionally, her and Ernesto are property managers at a townhome residence area in Bryan, Texas, where they resided prior to purchasing a larger home. Her family is Cajun, mostly all located in New Orleans or the surrounding area. Both of her parents are high school educated and have worked in the tourism industry of New Orleans since they graduated from high school.

Ernesto is a 44-year-old man from Edinburg, Texas, whose parents are originally from McAllen. He has one brother and one sister who also reside in Bryan, Texas. He, his parents, and his siblings have all graduated high school. His parents worked in custodial work in the Rio Grande Valley before being laid off. They are now in business for themselves mowing lawns for friends, ex-co-workers, family, and have started branching off to include others in their vicinity. Ernesto's siblings used to help their parents but have recently moved to the Brazos County area to start their own lawn mowing business. Ernesto currently works at Texas A&M University. He was previously married and had a daughter and son from that marriage. At the time of the interview, his daughter was expecting her first child with her husband.
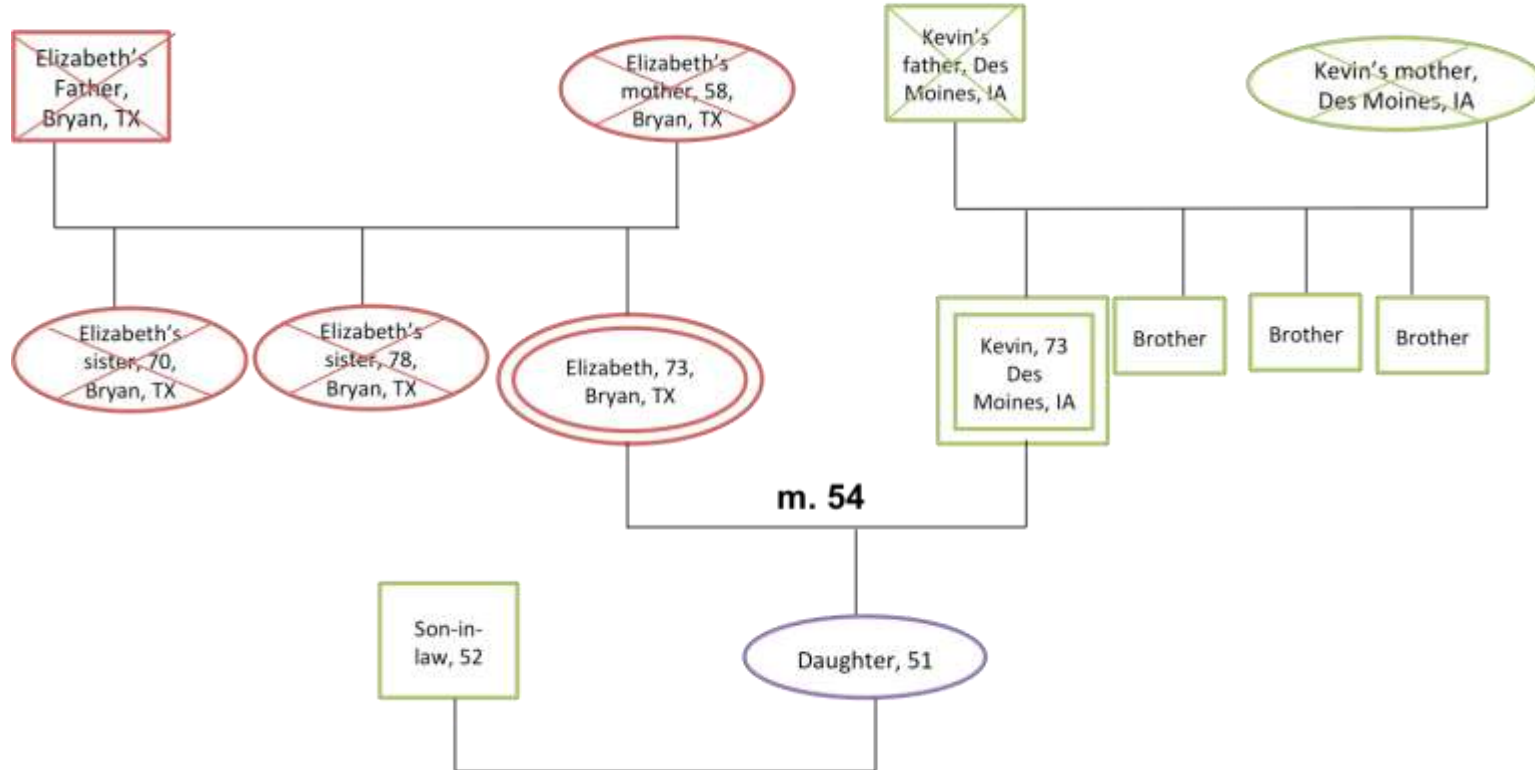
#42: Carla and Gary
Brazos County, TX

338
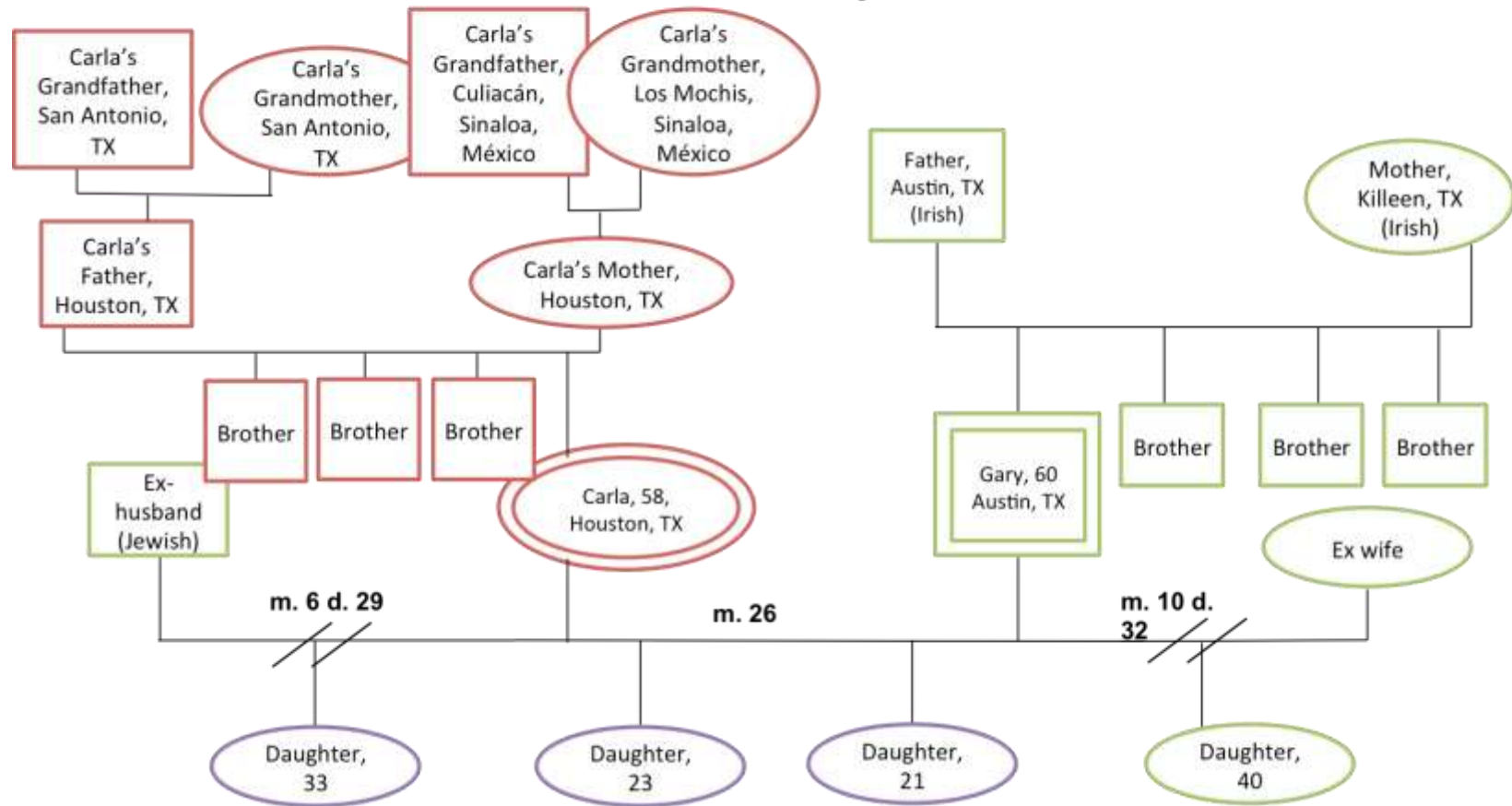
Couple #42

Carla is 58-year-old woman from Houston, Texas. At the time of her interview, she was finishing her master's degree in education and was preparing to start work as a social science teacher in the Brazos County area. Her parents and three older brothers are all college educated and work in a variety of fields in Houston. She was previously married to a Jewish man in Houston with whom she had her first daughter. A few months before the interview, her eldest daughter had given birth to Carla's first grandchild. In 2009, her second eldest daughter (first born from marriage with Gary) had married her college boyfriend and had moved to San Antonio to work as an elementary school teacher (husband went to law school and started working for an insurance company in their legal department). As of 2012, that same daughter had two children. Her youngest daughter graduated from college in 2012 with a degree in fine arts and had procured a job at an art gallery. Carla and Gary have been married for 26 years. Carla's ancestry can be traced back to Sinaloa from her maternal grandparents. She mentioned that they immigrated to the U.S. as part of a traveling circus and remained in the U.S. after quitting the show one night.

Gary is a 60-year-old man from Austin, Texas, who is currently working in telecommunications but is planning on retiring once Carla secures as job as a teacher. He has three brothers who all also work in telecommunications. His father helped raise livestock and worked as a butcher, making sausage and competing in local, state and national competitions. Both of Gary's grandfathers worked in one of the brickyards and together orchestrated a meeting for their children; the family joke is that the grandfathers are the ultimate matchmakers. His mother worked as the school nurse and taught piano lessons to neighborhood children at the church they regularly attended. Gary was previously married to a white woman and has one daughter from that marriage. He has two grandchildren from his eldest daughter (first marriage) and two grandchildren from his eldest daughter with Carla. He also considers Carla's daughter from her previous marriage as his daughter and considers her son to be his grandson.

#43: Elizabeth and Kevin
Brazos County, TX

Elizabeth's Father, Bryan, TX

Elizabeth's mother, 58, Bryan, TX

Kevin's father, Des Moines, IA

Kevin's mother, Des Moines, IA

Elizabeth's sister, 70, Bryan, TX

Elizabeth's sister, 78, Bryan, TX

Elizabeth, 73, Bryan, TX

Kevin, 73 Des Moines, IA

Brother

Brother

Brother

m. 54

Son-in-law, 52

Daughter, 51

Couple #43

Elizabeth is a 73-year-old woman from Bryan, Texas. She completed high school and fondly remembers when schools became desegregated and she started hearing the word "Hispanic." She worked as a dance instructor for most of her life but has been retired for a few years now. Her parents were also born and raised in Bryan, Texas, but migrated from San Antonio. She does not know exactly where her family is originally from, but she does have several very old pictures of family members dating to the late 1800s. She and Kevin have been married for 54 years and have one daughter, 51. They have traveled extensively given that Kevin was in the Air Force but have since then retired in the Brazos County area.

Kevin is a 73-year-old man from Des Moines, Iowa. He completed high school and enrolled in the Air Force and was in the Brazos County area visiting while on leave. On his way to the county fair, he and some of his fellow airmen were driving around the downtown area when he spotted Elizabeth. He made his friend stop the car and insisted on accompanying her to the fair so he could spend more time with her. They kept in contact for about six months through letters (he was later stationed at the Laredo Air Force Base). The next time he visited Bryan, he asked Elizabeth's father for her hand in marriage and they have been together ever since. She followed him to every location he was stationed at during his time in the Air Force. He later worked as a recruitment officer and has been intensively invested time into mentoring young men and women in the military.
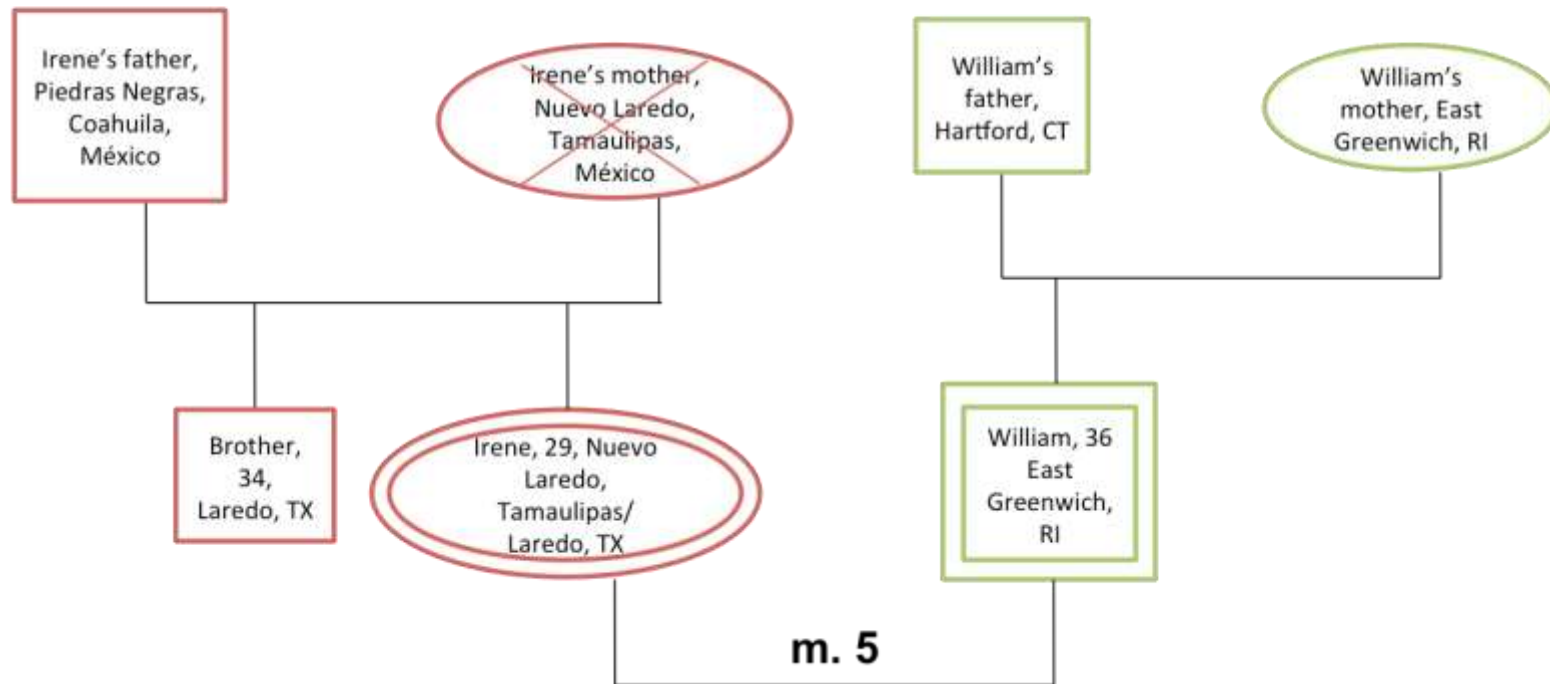
#44: Erin and Mateo
Brazos County, TX
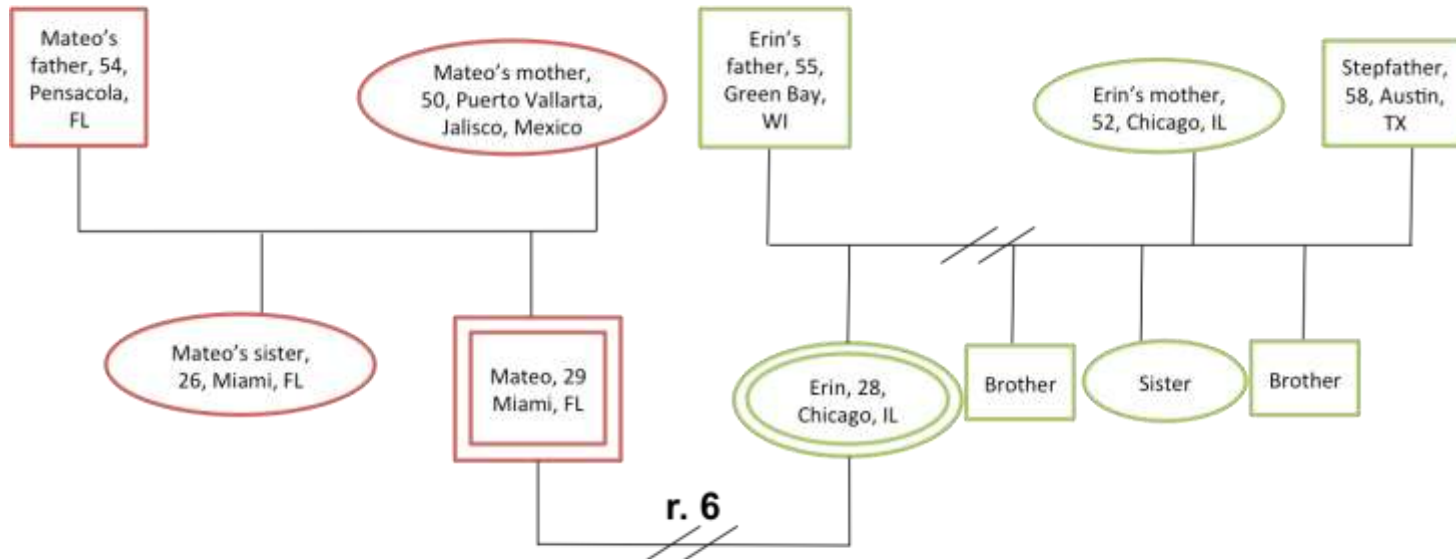
Note: Since the time of the interview (2010), this couple had relocated to southern California to pursue new careers in new locations. As of 2011, they had broken up and Mateo had moved to a different city in southern California. Mateo's current relationship status is unknown and Erin has dated several white men since breaking up with Mateo.

Couple #44

Erin is a 28-year-old woman originally from Chicago, Illinois, who moved to the Brazos County area when she was 11 with her mother who accepted a position as a physician in the area. She is of Scandinavian descent on her father's side and Polish on her father's side. She has a brother and sister from her parents' marriage and a half brother from her mother's remarriage. She has a bachelor's degree in political science but has since changed course in her life and is pursuing an occupation as a fitness instructor. Her mother has a medical degree and his father is a life insurance broker. She and Mateo met through mutual friends and later found out that they lived on the same block. At the time of the interview, they had been together for 6 years. Since 2010, Erin and Mateo moved to southern California and in 2011 they broke up amicably.

Mateo is a 29-year-old man of Mexican descent from Miami, Florida. At the time of his interview, he was working on a master's degree in physics. His parents both immigrated to the Florida area to work in agriculture in the Redlands area and have completed middle school. His parents continue to work in agriculture, but have been working less in the fields and more in the unions since aging. He has one sister who is still in the Miami area. In 2010, Mateo finished his master's degree and moved to southern California with Erin. After breaking up, he started working as a science consultant on children's television shows.

#45: Irene and William
Brazos County, TX

Irene's father, Piedras Negras, Coahuila, México

Irene's mother, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, México

William's father, Hartford, CT

William's mother, East Greenwich, RI

Brother, 34, Laredo, TX

Irene, 29, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas/ Laredo, TX
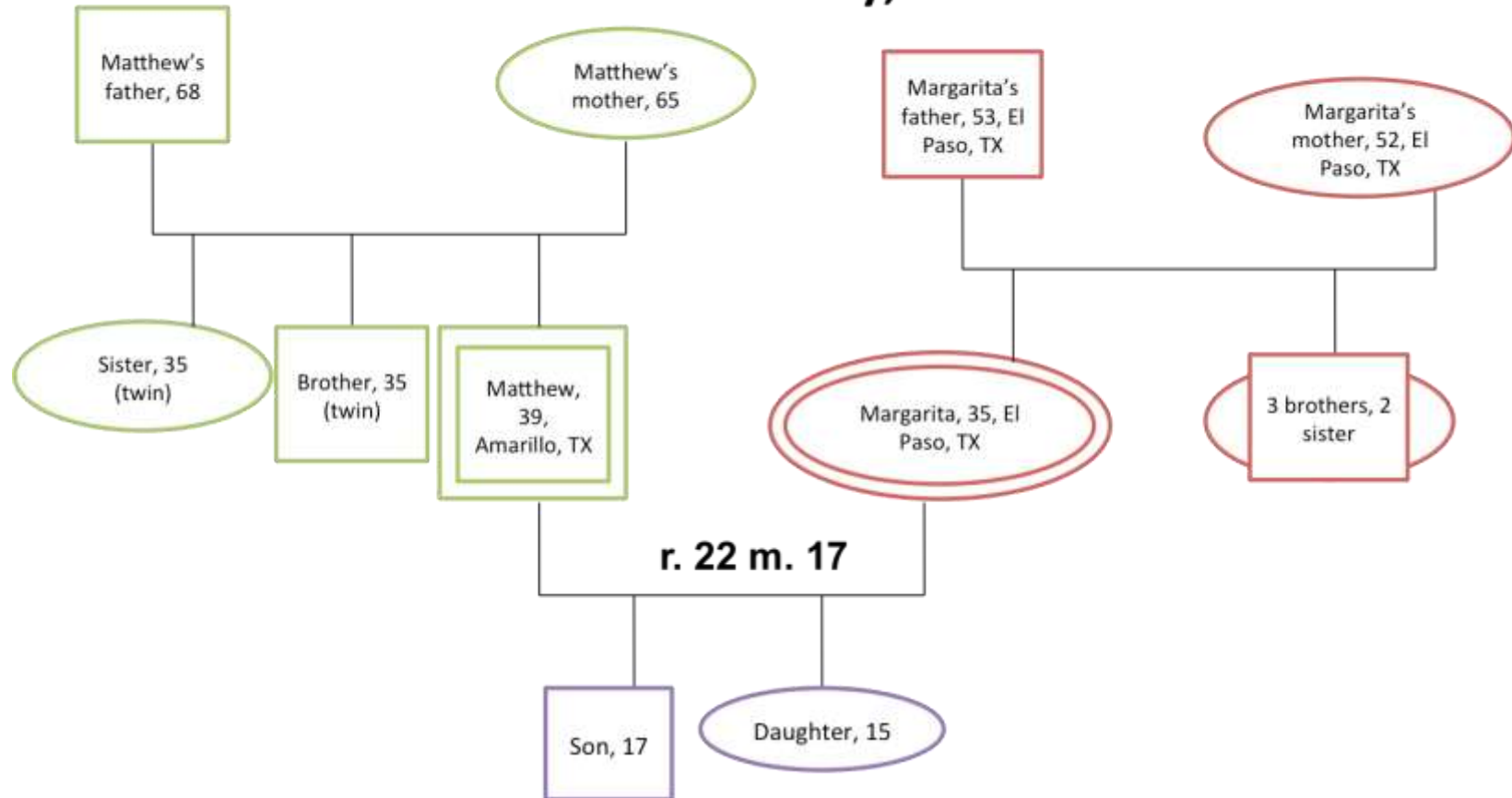
William, 36 East Greenwich, RI

m. 5

Couple #45

Irene is a 29-year-old woman from Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico area who immigrated as a child to the Laredo, Texas area and who currently lives in Bryan, Texas, with her husband, William. She attended Texas A&M International for her bachelor's degree in Art with a teaching certification. She is a special education arts teacher in a nearby county. Her father is from the state of Coahuila and her mother is from Tamaulipas. Both of her parents have bachelor's degrees (mother in law and father in business administration) and immigrated to the U.S. to evade political and cartel violence. They have worked an assortment of jobs in the U.S.

William is a 36-year-old woman from East Greenwich, Rhode Island. He is a master's student in public policy and met Irene when they both attended an educational reform and policy summit on the east coast and kept in touch, later finding out that they were both residing in the Washington, D.C. area. They married 2 years into their relationship and have been married for 5 years. William's parents are both business owners on the east coast and come from a wealthy family. He is an only child. His family is of English and German descent.

#46: Margarita and Matthew
Brazos County, TX

Matthew's father, 68

Matthew's mother, 65

Margarita's father, 53, El Paso, TX

Margarita's mother, 52, El Paso, TX

Sister, 35 (twin)

Brother, 35 (twin)

Matthew, 39, Amarillo, TX

Margarita, 35, El Paso, TX

3 brothers, 2 sister

r. 22 m. 17

Son, 17

Daughter, 15

Couple #46

Margarita is a 35-year-old woman from El Paso, Texas who has been with her husband for 22 years (since they were in high school). They met when she was a freshman in high school and he was a freshman. They continued their relationship while she was finishing high school and Matthew attended college. They married at the beginning of June (after her high school graduation and his college graduation). He studied economics and business administration in college and started his own tutoring business while she was in college. She obtained a bachelor's degree in education and psychology and with her husband started a series of tutoring agencies that began in Amarillo, Texas, and have expanded ever since. They settled in the Brazos County area because they both appreciate Texas A&M University and thought they would be an asset to the community. They had their first child in their first year of marriage and their daughter a couple of years later. Margarita's father is a pastor from El Paso, Texas, and her mom was the social justice representative at their church. Her family has been in the El Paso area for several generations and originate in Ciudad Juarez.

Matthew is a 39-year-old man from Amarillo, Texas, who has been with Margarita for 22 years and married for 17 (together since high school). He has a bachelor's degree in economics and business administration and with Margarita owns a franchise of tutoring agencies throughout Texas. His family has bee ranching for generations and have consistently provided meat to many of the steakhouses in the area. His ancestors were also instrumental in providing capital for the railroad, which to this day continues to run through the city. His family is of English descent.
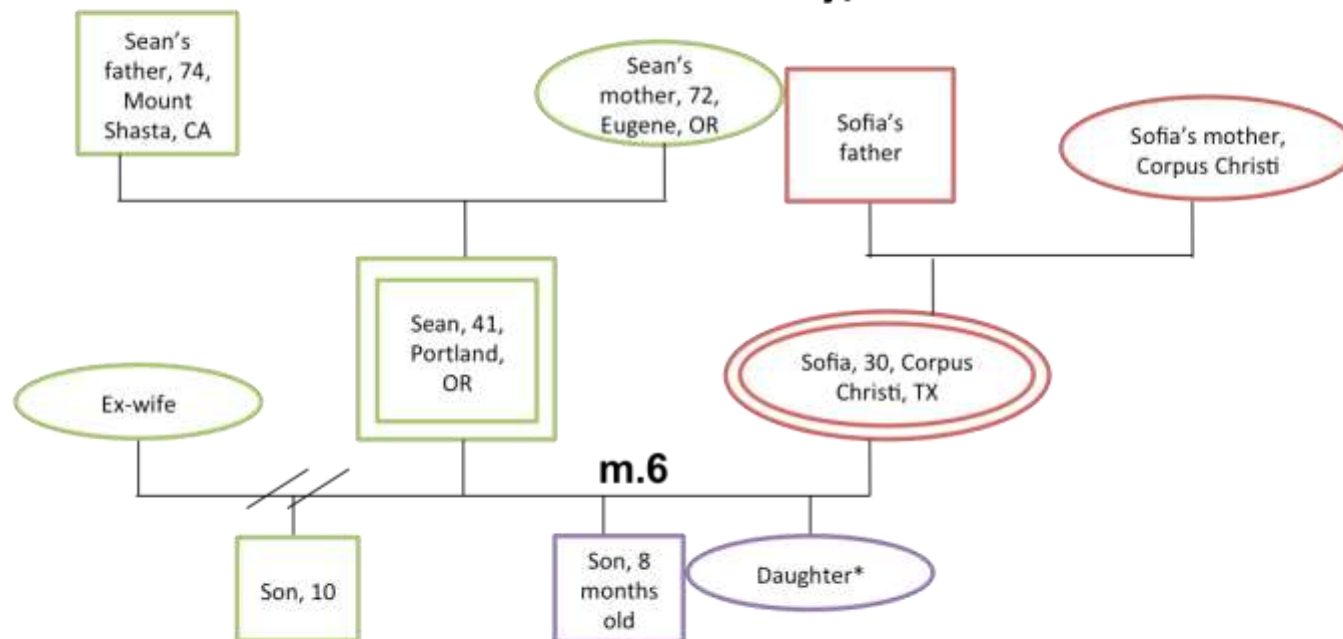
#47: Mariana and Zach
Brazos County, TX
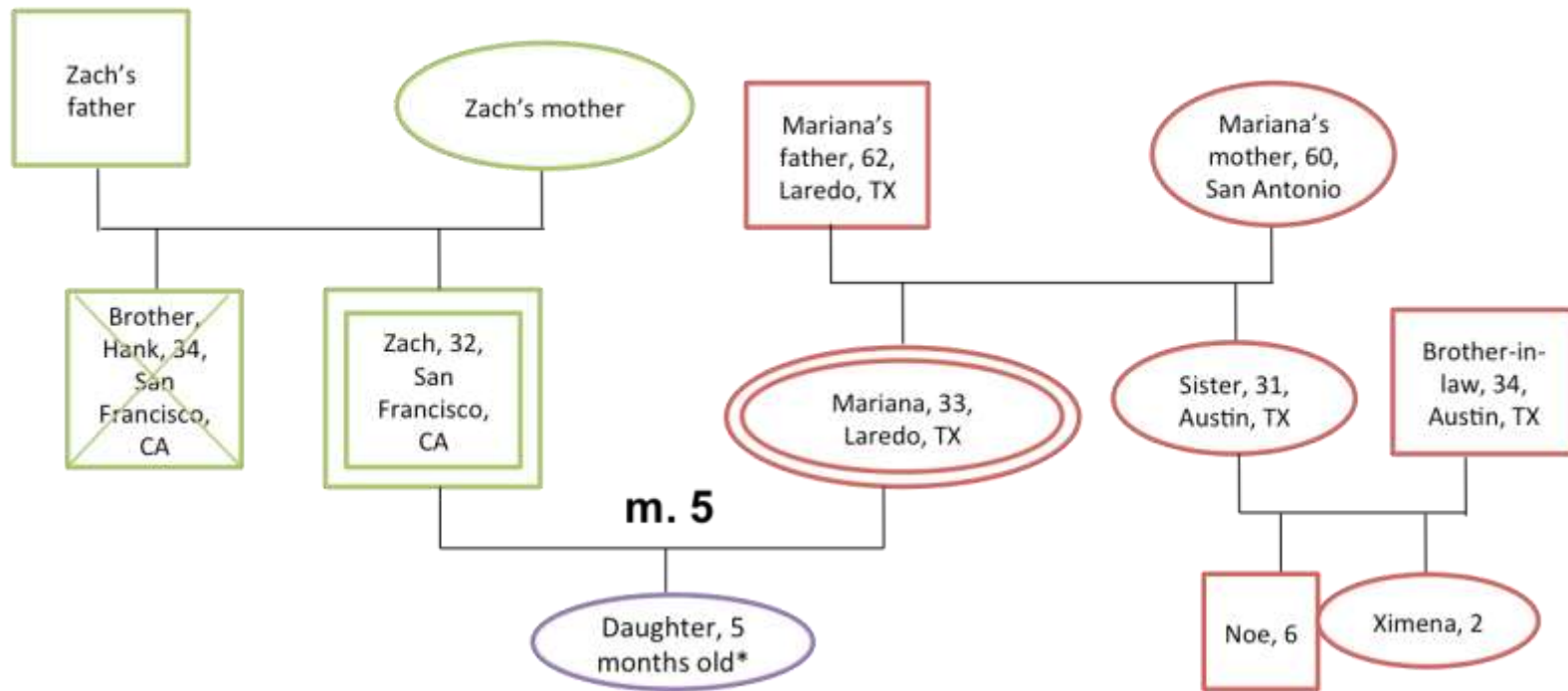
*Note: Daughter was born March 2014, several years after they were interviewed

Couple #47

Mariana is a 33-year-old woman from Laredo, Texas, whose family is from the Laredo and San Antonio area. She has a bachelor's degree in education and at the time of her interview was working on a master's degree in education. Prior to seeking a master's degree, she worked as a teacher for years in New Mexico and California. In 2011 her and Zach moved to Canada so she could pursue a Ph.D. in education and Zach pursued a second master's in animation (he was finishing his bachelor's degree in visual arts at the time of the interview). Mariana is of Mexican indigenous descent and is an active participant, attending and participating in Sundance activities in Arizona every year (although she has participated in them in other locations as well). Her mother has a bachelor's degree in education and is also a teacher while her father works in the Rio Grande Valley community helping bring clean potable water to the communities through non-governmental alternative technology. She has one sister who is married with two kids and who was residing in Austin, Texas, at the time of Mariana's interview but who has since relocated to a different state. Since 2012, her parents have left the Brazos County area and now live in San Antonio. In March of 2014, Mariana gave birth to their first daughter.

Zach is a 32-year-old man from San Francisco, California, whose family is also from that area and continues to reside there. He is unsure of his ethnic ancestry since his family never spoke of it and the information died with his grandparents. He has two master's degrees (one in visual arts/programming and the other in math). He currently works for a video game company in Canada. His family comes from a very impoverished background and holds no more than a high school education. His older brother, Hank, was the owner of a tattoo shop in the California Bay Area but tragically passed away after being involved in a motorcycle accident.

#48: Sofia and Sean
Brazos County, TX

Sean's father, 74, Mount Shasta, CA

Sean's mother, 72, Eugene, OR

Sofia's father

Sofia's mother, Corpus Christi

Sean, 41, Portland, OR

Ex-wife

Sofia, 30, Corpus Christi, TX

m.6

Son, 10

Son, 8 months old

Daughter*

*Note: At the time of interview Sean and Sofia's son was less than a year old and their daughter was born in 2011

350

Couple #48
Sofia is a 30-year-old woman originally from Corpus Christi, Texas, who has been residing in Brazos County since she finished her undergraduate degree. At the time of her interview, Sofia had recently received a Ph.D. in the social sciences and now works for a qualitative and quantitative research marketing company. She grew up in the Corpus Christi area and considers herself to be "Hispanic" despite her father being of Polish descent and her mother being Mexican. At the time of her interview she and her husband Sean, had been married for six years and had a 6-month-old son. In 2011, they welcomed their daughter. She has siblings but has not specified how many. She met her husband, Sean, for the first time at a party.

Sean is a 41-year-old man from Portland, Oregon, who has a Ph.D. in a science field and works in academia as a researcher. He and Sofia also own several rental properties in the Brazos County. He was previously married and has a son with his first wife. He is of English descent; his father is from north California and his mother is from Oregon.

# #49: Vanessa and Chris
Brazos County, TX
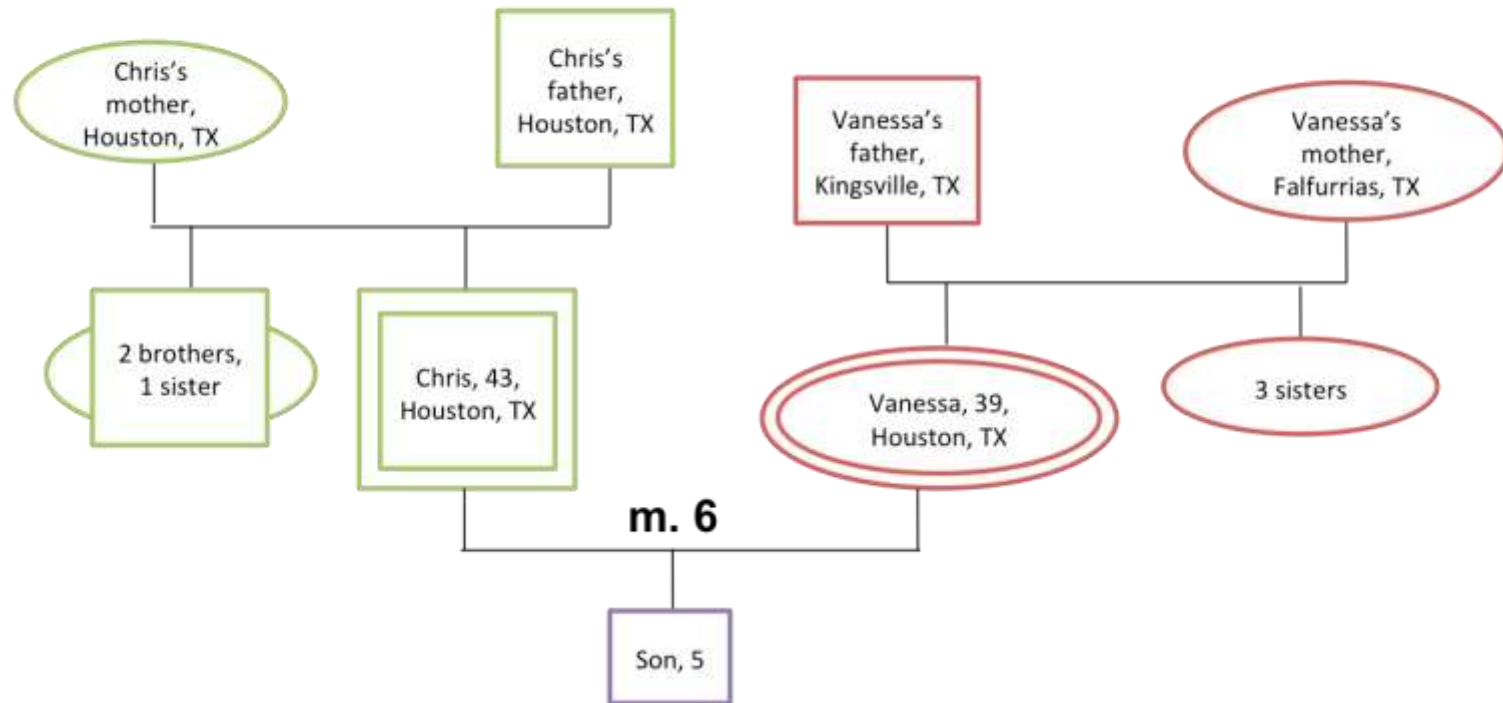
Couple #49

Vanessa is a 39-year-old woman from Houston, Texas, who has been married for 6 years to her husband, Chris and they live in the Brazos County. She has a bachelor's degree in education and works as a teacher. Her father is from Kingsville, Texas, and her mother is from Falfurrias, Texas. They are both high school educated. She has three sisters, all of who live in proximity of their parents with their families. She has one son with her husband Chris who she met while teaching at the same school. Chris asked her out on a date as soon as he accepted a position as principal at a different school so there would not be a conflict of interest. They have been together ever since and have a 5-year-old son together.

Chris is a 43-year-old man from Houston, Texas, who has a Ph.D. in education and currently works as a principal in the school district. He is of German descent and says that Texas is the perfect state for people of German descent since there are so many people of German descent in the state. His parents were college educated and were also teachers (mother was a math teacher and father was a physical education teacher). He has two brothers and one sister.

#50: Veronica and Jacob
Brazos County, TX
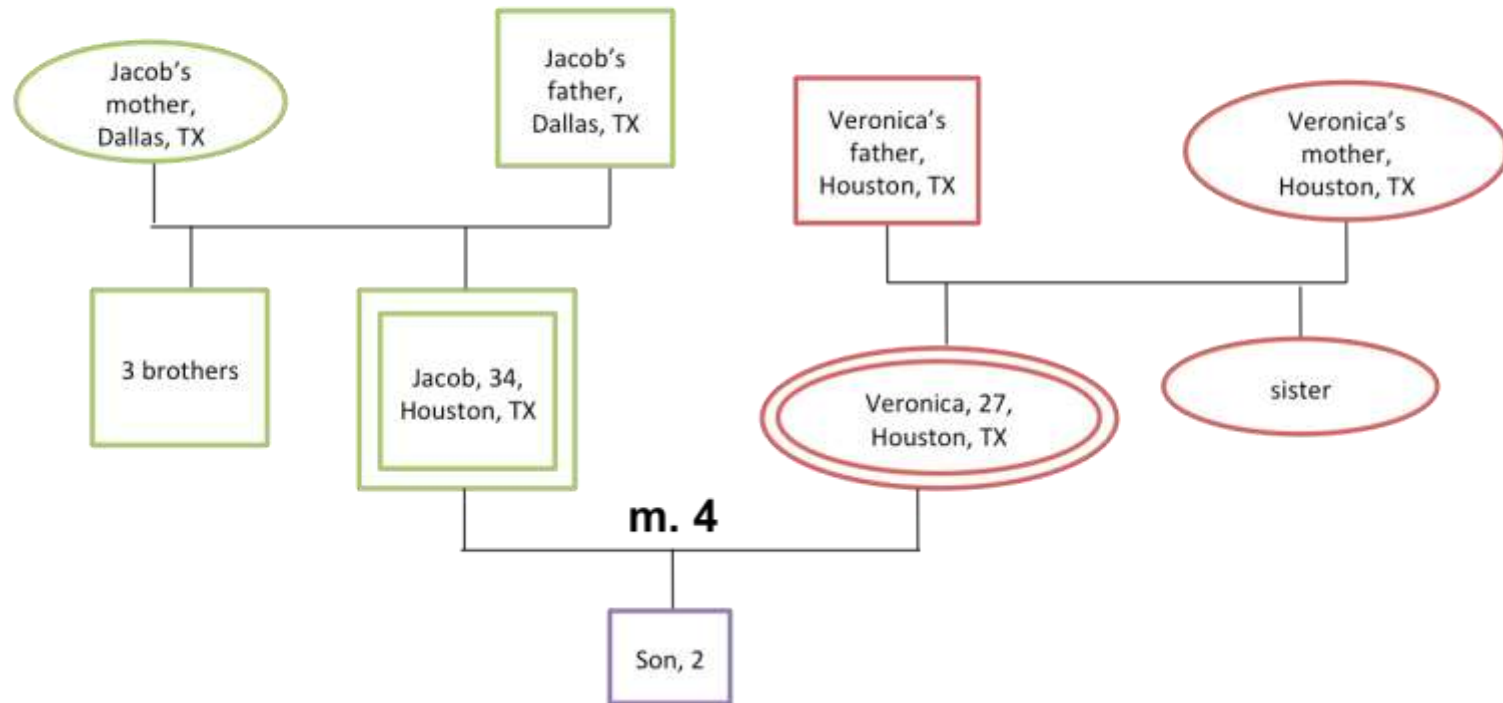
Couple #50

Veronica is a 27-year-old woman from Houston, Texas, who is married to Jacob. She had previously received an associate's degree at a community college and is currently working on finishing her bachelor's degree. She wants to eventually get a law degree and practice family law. She has one younger sister who is also in college. Her father is in law enforcement and her mother is a novelist. Her parents are both from Houston, Texas, but their families come from the Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico area who immigrated and opened a business in El Paso, Texas. Veronica has previously worked in marketing and promotions and has had a few jobs as a fashion model. She has a 2-year-old son with her husband, Jacob.

Jacob is a 34-year-old man from Houston, Texas, who has a high school education but works in entertainment helping book rap and hip hop performers at local nightclubs. He also designs all of the publicity materials and album artwork. He has three brothers who are all also involved in the Houston entertainment scene. His parents live in the Dallas, Texas area and are high school educated and worked in manufacturing at Texas Instruments. His family is of Irish descent.