# BROWN FACES IN WHITE PLACES: RESISTING RACIST AGGRESSIONS AND NONBELONGING THROUGH LATINA/O ORGANIZATIONS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITIES

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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August 2017

Major Subject: Sociology

# ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I examine Latina/o undergraduate students' experiences with systemic racism and racial identity in relation to their academic persistence at three predominantly white universities. By employing ethnographic observation and a focus group with one fraternity, and in-depth qualitative interviews with 43 respondents, this study reveals that Latina/o students experience what I term racist aggressions, racialized nonbelonging, and delegitimation at their universities. I find that these experiences negatively affect their relationship with the institution and as a consequence, their academic decisions. I develop the concept of the "white racial place" to describe these dynamics at predominantly white universities. Finally, I find that Latina/o students gain a strong and critical sense of belonging through their participation in a Latina/o sorority or fraternity, which allows them to reject racist stereotypes and to foster positive social identities that promote academic persistence and success in college. Through these organizations, Latina/o students also advance positive social changes that transform the racial landscapes of their universities.

# DEDICATION

Dedico este trabajo a mis padres, Celia y Santos Orta. Sus sacrificios y esfuerzos siempre fueron mi inspiración. Y a mis hermanos, Juan, Maria, Yolanda, Santos Jr., Roberto, y Veronica: you continue to be my role models. And to my nieces and nephews Felicia, Noemi, Mia, Samuel, Matthew, Jorge, Aiden, and Nicolas: my hope for your bright futures has been my motivation. And finally, to my partner Jacqueline: you have always been my anchor through the storm – keeping me afloat and without whom I would be lost.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Joe R. Feagin for his support and guidance throughout the course of this research. His fight for social and racial justice through research and has been a great influence on my work. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Ed Murguia, Dr. Mark Fossett, and Dr. Felipe Hinojosa for their guidance and mentorship throughout my graduate program. A number of faculty have also provided me with valuable mentorship and encouragement throughout the years, Drs. Wendy Leo Moore, Dave Embrick, Pat Goldsmith, Nancy Plankey-Videla, Jim Burk, and Jane Sell.

This research would be nowhere without the participation of the remarkable young men and women who shared their stories with me. I hope this work remains true to our collective narrative. Thank you for your continued work in leading our community toward a brighter future.

There are also too many friends to name who have provided me with community throughout the years, Richard Rodriguez, Felipe Hinojosa, Maria Ovalle, Juan Salinas, Glenn Bracey, Alfredo Salinas, Jesus Smith, Martin Puga, Jenn Guillen, Laura Oviedo, Manny Grajales, Helen JuYin Wong, Juanita Garcia, Dave Cameron, and Wally Hart. Que sigan adelante. I would also like to thank the brothers of Lambda Theta Phi for welcoming me into their chapters with open arms and being there for me during my time in Texas. Finally, thank you to my brothers who have been there for me when I needed

them throughout the years, Jose Marroquin, Ricardo Lopez, Jesse Palencia, Joe Palencia, David Vasquez, and Uriel Montoya.

## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

This work was supported by a dissertation committee consisting of Professor Joe R. Feagin (Chair), Professor Mark Fossett of the Department of Sociology, Professor Edward Murguia of the Department of Sociology, and Professor Felipe Hinojosa of the Department of History.

Graduate study was supported by the Doctoral Diversity Fellowship from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at Texas A&M University and Assistantships from the Sociology Department in addition to a scholarship from the Josefina A. Ovalle Foundation for Education. Data collection for this study was also supported by awards from the Department of Sociology, the College of Liberal Arts, the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute, and the Glasscock Center for Humanities Research at Texas A&M University.

# NOMENCLATURE

## RESEARCH SITES

| | |
|---|---|
| MIDWEST PUBLIC UNIVERSITY | MPU |
| SOUTHERN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY | SOUTHERN TECH |
| UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTHWEST | U OF S |

## GREEK COUNCIL AFFILIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| BLACK GREEK COUNCIL | BGC |
| MULTICULTURAL GREEK COUNCIL | MGC |
| WHITE FRATERNITY COUNCIL | WFC |
| WHITE SORORITY COUNCIL | WSC |

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

When I asked respondents at Midwestern Public University whether they had ever experienced unfair treatment because of their race or ethnicity, a majority, 7 out of 10 interviewees at this university replied that they had never experienced any discrimination. Most, however, also followed their response by commenting that they would not be surprised someone they knew had experienced discrimination even though they could not recall it at the moment. After my first day of conducting interviews at this site, I was invited to join some of members of the Phi fraternity to their weekly group study hours. We met at one of the larger, newer libraries at about eight o'clock on a snowy Tuesday evening in late March of 2013. Not surprisingly, as we made our way through all four floors of the library study areas, we were unable to find an area where the five of us could study comfortably together as a group. There were simply not enough open seats to accommodate the increased number of students who were preparing for midterms. As we made our way to the exits, the members of the Phi Fraternity began to discuss where we would search for space next, when they had the following brief interaction:

Hector: So, where we going?

Miguel: (Frustrated) Let's go to the Business Library.

Diego: *Ey*, your library, bro (Looking in Hector's direction).

(Uriel and Diego chuckle).

Hector: Yeah, man. F*ck that guy.

DO: Wait, why is it your library?

Uriel: We were studying at the Law library one time. And it was pretty empty. It is always quiet there. But we were talking in a low tone, a low voice level and this white kid walks in and of all the tables, he sits at ours. And … you got all these empty tables and he sits at ours. We look at each other like, "okay" (skeptically). So then, were talking and the kid says, "You know, no one else here is talking" and so Diego tells him, "Dude, you sat at *our* table." He says, "*You guys don't even look like students, what are you guys doing here anyway?*"

The interaction above describes the very common racist aggressions that Latina/o[1] students face at predominantly white universities. In much of the literature, scenarios described above are often referred to as "racial microaggressions," and, as the label may suggest, these types of interactions are not explicit, direct, or what one might call "classic racism." Rather, these comments that cannot be explicitly tied to racial discrimination as no derogatory terms were used. Instead, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, interactions like these demarcate racial difference and inferiority without stating it. They point to a proxy for racial difference and suggest, indirectly, some form of inferiority, stereotype, or other racist belief about the target. Indeed, often times, for Latina/o students, these comments can be underhanded compliments that

[1] Because all of the respondents in the study identified with binary gender labels, that is, as man or woman and/or male or female, I employ the "Latina/o" labels as opposed to the more inclusive "Latinx." Additionally, it should be noted that the large majority of Greek organizations, from which this sample is drawn, are segregated by gender and maintain separate governing councils. This likely influences gender identities among individual members as well as their gendered experiences in college. In this way, Latina/o closely reflects the lived experiences of respondents in this study.

allude to a widespread white racial framing or specific stereotyping of their group. These interactions are nonetheless painful and, for students, academically discouraging.

In the case of the Phi Fraternity members at Midwestern Public University's Business Library mentioned above, the white student asserted that the library was more his than theirs by calling into question the group's right to be at the library. That is, he outright questioned whether they were students. Importantly, for the respondents, while many are able to shrug off comments such as these by laughing at them, "microaggressions" accumulate to much more than the term may suggest. Over time, they can take on greater meaning for individuals and, for students, for their educational outcomes. At the very least, those who experience racist aggressions spend much time and energy processing or thinking about such events. It is important to note that for students, where integration into the university plays such a critical role in their educational persistence, for their belonging to be questioned by their white peers, can lead to doubts about their personal belonging at their university. This process is invariably tied to their cultural and racial backgrounds.

In this dissertation, I examine the academic and social experiences of Latina/o college students at predominantly white universities, giving special attention to the race, class, and gender oppressions that invariably affect their educational persistence and success. In brief, I find that Latina/o college students experience an intense form of *racialized nonbelonging* at their university that is reflected in their inability to identify with their university, a vital factor in decisions to persist in one's education. To better reflect the processes that delegitimate their status as students and members of the

campus community, I suggest that rather than conceptualizing the university as a racially "white space," the predominantly white university is a *white racial place.* In a white racial place, Latina/o students have little sense of belonging, severely limited positive representation of their backgrounds, and they experience a multitude of racist aggressions at the hands of peers, professors, administrators, staff, on and off campus that work together to discourage their academic persistence. Central to the white racial place is the idea that Latina/o students, and students of color generally, do not belong at their university; a place that they are supposed to embrace and that is supposed to embrace them as full-fledged members of the community.

**Latinas/os in Higher Education**

The number of Latinas/os enrolled in college has increased significantly in the past 20 years, rising from 22% to 35% (Krogstad 2016). This of a broad upward trend reflected in an increase in the percentage of every U.S. racial group enrolled in college. The largest of U.S. racial and ethnic groups' representation in college enrollment grew overall; the number of Asians enrolled in college grew from 55% to 64%, whites from 37% to 42%, and blacks from 25% to 33%. While overall these changes signal important progress in increased access to higher education, significant racial disparities persist. As of 2014, 63% of Asians between the ages of 25 and 29 have obtained a bachelor's degree, compared with 41% of whites, 22% of blacks, and 15% of Latinas/os. This significant gap in college completion rates along racial lines is alarming given that over the course of the last 20 years, the portion of the population that is white has decreased and aged, while Latinas/os have increased in number, and are a characteristically

younger population, suggesting growth in the college-aged population in the very near future (Brown and Patten 2014). Taken together, these trends depict enduring disparities in college graduation rates in the context of a growing Latina/o population in the U.S. If Latina/o college enrollment is at its highest but their graduation rates are among the lowest, compared to other racial groups, what is it that leads to these disparate outcomes along racial lines?

The goal of this project is to examine the academic and social experiences of Latina/o students at predominantly white universities. As education researchers have previously examined, educational persistence in college is heavily influenced by the academic and social experiences of students which operate in tandem to integrate them (or not) into their college or university (Tinto 1975; 1988). In this way, both formal and informal experiences work to retain students in the university, ultimately leading to successful degree completion by encouraging the level of commitment students have to their institution as well as to their career and academic goals.

Clearly, if college experiences and thus graduation rates, vary largely by race, it is useful to take that as a starting point for research. As a result, the guiding research questions for this study include: What can we learn about predominantly white universities based on the racialized educational experiences of Latina/o college students? To this end, this study focuses on race a central component of students' experiences in college. I ask, how do Latina/o students experience racial inequality in college? More specifically, I draw on data collected from Latina/o sororities and fraternities that yield rich insights into social and academic experiences and processes. I ask, what role does

participation in Latina/o sororities and fraternities serve in the college experiences and academic decisions of their members? Highlighting the behaviors and influences of student decisions to persist in their education also reflect the university context insofar as the institution provides a welcoming environment and avenues for student success.

**Why Research Latina/o Sororities and Fraternities? Context and Background**

Latina/o sororities and fraternities offer a productive opportunity to study the role of raced, class-based, and gendered college experiences and their relationship to Latina/o student persistence. To be certain, sororities and fraternities reflect dynamics that are a matter of widely accepted practices on college campuses: they are largely socially segregated by gender and, as my study shows, significantly by race, class, and culture. Latina/o sororities and fraternities are just that, campus-based organizations that are comprised mainly by co-ethnics. In fact, outside of using Greek letters and some of the organizational elements such as having an elected president, having a charter, rules, and bylaws, Latina/o sororities and fraternities share little in common with their traditional, historically white counterparts.

Contrary to the images popularized by mainstream media outlets about stereotypical college sororities and fraternities, Latina/o organizations do not have official houses where members reside, and they do not have a large membership. Most Latina/o sororities and fraternities have at most between 5-15 members on a given campus. Also, they do not receive generous donations from wealthy alumni, or other resources that carry so much prestige or status among white sororities or fraternities on college campuses. Instead, as my data shows, Latina/o sororities and fraternities are

often comprised of members who are of working class or low income backgrounds and they are most often first-generation college students. Often times, these students are on the "college success pathway" that precludes heavy drinking of alcohol or other activities that may distract them from academic achievement (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013). While each sorority or fraternity chapter typically has few members, many sororities and fraternities have associations with chapters at colleges and universities across the country. In this way, the dynamics I observe at the three campuses in this study, may be similar at other colleges or universities elsewhere.

**The Racial Place of Latinas/os in College**

Much of the sociological research on inequality in higher education has focused primarily on the role of class status and how it is reproduced within colleges and universities. Through exclusive social networks or institutional practices that normalize middle and upper class status, scholars have argued that students from working class and poor backgrounds are placed in a disadvantaged position that results in negative outcomes for their educational and long-term social mobility (Lee 2016; Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Lee and Kramer 2013; Dumais 2002). This work advances our understanding of class-based inequality in students lived realities in college and beyond. Importantly, much of the research also identifies the gendered dynamics that can support the reproduction of class inequality (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Dumais 2002). These significant contributions notwithstanding, this body of research gives short shrift to classed college experiences *along racial lines*.

Another thread of research has examined the negative college experiences that adversely impact the wellbeing of students of color. This research examines how students of color continue to experience overt direct racial discrimination in addition to experiencing forms of symbolic or covert racism that proliferate at predominantly white universities (Ortega Unpublished Dissertation; Hughey 2010; Harper 2009; Picca and Feagin 2007; Sue 2007; Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996). Much of the research coming from the Higher Education field has focused on the race-based experiences that students of color have had in college and has emphasized the "racial microaggressions" that accumulate to a negative "campus climate" for students of color generally, and Latina/o students specifically (Sue 2010; Yosso, et al. 2009; Solórzano, Ceja, Yosso 2000; Solórzano 1998). At base, these authors suggest that "microaggressions" can lead to an unwelcoming environment or "campus climate" for students of color and, as a result, negative outcomes for their decisions to persist in their education.

Concerning the analysis of predominantly white universities, sociologists have examined how, in addition to experienced overt forms of racism, students of color also experience a biased campus culture that could be referred to as a "racialized space" that is embodied in the white student population (Feagin, Vera, Imani 1996). As these scholars explain, a "white space" in college refers to the whiteness of university spaces that is reflected in biased symbolic representation, and a widely-held territoriality over white property among whites – including the opposition to interracial relationships and whites' resistance to equal status with black students. When black students experience symbolic racism, analysts refer to both a lack of symbolic representation of black

students, such as in the university-wide year book or as with the insufficient black faculty or representation among the leadership of the university. Finally, existing symbols within the university that positively present a history of white supremacy serve to remind students of their subordinate social position.

Other researchers have discussed the importance of the "white space" concept to examine the contexts in which racial segregation produces, by influencing or limiting interracial interactions, racial inequality (Massey and Denton 1998; Calmore 1995). Residential segregation researchers have suggested that white space could refer to any given neighborhood or community area that is otherwise predominantly and historically white. As others have noted, in a white space people of color are hyper-surveilled, often through the monitoring of their physical presence with suspicion of criminal intent (Anderson 2015; Evans 2013; Yancey 2012; Lipsitz 2011; Rios 2011). Others have examined how even the language of people of color is policed in a public and white homogenous space (Hill 1998). In a Du Boisian analysis, people of color are perceived of as "a problem" in this space simply by virtue of being present (2008; 1903). In this light, researchers have examined how whites have created a "spatial imaginary" surrounding the neighborhoods (and associated resources) that have been historically attributed to whites (Lipsitz 2011).

Building on the white space concept, other researchers have suggested that, universities are institutions that are historically structured in ways that privilege and protect white students at the expense of students of color (Moore 2008). In this way, in addition to being comprised primarily of whites, universities are also "white institutional

spaces" where racial interactions are protected under a pretense of "colorblindness" and abstract liberal discourse, in addition to demographic and administrative power being concentrated among whites in the university (Moore 2008).

In sum, while previous research addressing racism and class inequality in college has been fruitful in examining how each operate, there exists a gap in our understanding of how racism and class inequality at predominantly white universities operate in tandem. As a result, research that attempts to understand how racial, class, and gender oppressions work together systemically is needed. The goal of this study is to address how working class Latinas/os persist in their education at predominantly white universities.

**The Racialization of U.S. Latinas/os: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview**

Latinas/os represent one the fastest growing demographic groups in the U.S. For example, between 2000-2014, Latinas/os represented over half (54%) of the total U.S. population growth. These trends are projected to continue, with the population of U.S. Latinas/os increasing to 128 million or 29% of the total U.S. population by the year 2050 (Saenz 2010). As this population continues to increase, it is ever more important to study Latina/o social experiences.

Substantial research demonstrates that Latinas/os continue to experience both systemic and individual racial discrimination resulting in gross inequalities along multiple measures. For example, Latinas/os face significant discrimination and experience inequality when it comes to employment and labor market outcomes. One study found that Latinos, and particularly Latina women, continue to suffer in the labor

market when compared to white male[2] counterparts, as white males receive the most job leads compared to Latinas (McDonald, Lin, and Ao 2009). In terms of accrued wealth, as of 2009, the median net worth of Latina/o households was $6,325 compared to the median net worth of white households, which was $113,149. In other words, the median net worth of white households was 18 times greater than that of Latina/o households (Kotchhar, Fry, and Taylor 2011). To further demonstrate how inequality operates in the U.S. along racial lines, we can review data from the recent housing market collapse and subsequent Great Recession of 2008. Figures suggested that between 2005 and 2009, whites lost 16 percent of their median net worth whereas Latinas/os lost 66 percent of their net worth (Kotchhar, Fry, and Taylor 2011). Effectively, Latinas/os do not at least experience wealth *loss* at equal rates as whites. Importantly, concerning housing and residential segregation, recent research demonstrated that the great recession has been partially responsible for increasing residential segregation between whites and Latinas/os (Hall, Crowder, and Spring 2015). Finally, research that has examined the poverty rates for each group, has found that 24% of Latinas/os are living in poverty, compared to 11.6% of whites (Macartney, Bishaw, and Fontenot 2013).

Concerning U.S. migration, as recent scholarship (Goldsmith and Eason Forthcoming) shows, the increased criminalization of undocumented migrants and corresponding increased arrest, detention, and deportation of undocumented migrants

[2] Although I use "male" in place of "man," I recognize that the term reifies gender as a biological concept rather than a socially constructed performance. I use the term for the sake of brevity. Additionally, many of my respondents also use the term "male" to refer to gender and this may point to a particular dynamic of heterosexual gender and sexuality performances.

has also inequitably affected Latinas/os. Figures suggested that Latinas/os account for upwards of 90% of detentions and deportations even though migrants from Latin America make up less than 70% of the undocumented migrant population in the U.S. Within the criminal justice system, other research suggests that Latino men are subject to hyper criminalization wherein their daily activities, cultural behaviors and styles are considered deviant, leading to their marginalization, punishment, and in many cases, eventually incarceration (Rios 2011). Ultimately, as of 2017, Latinas/os make up 33.4% of the imprisoned population whereas whites only make up 26.6% of the imprisoned population, a figure, nearly double the size of the Latina/o population in the U.S., suggesting a gross overrepresentation of Latinas/os in the criminal justice system (BOP.gov).

Latinas/os continue to face significant discrimination through what researchers have referred to as "everyday racism" (Feagin and Cobas 2014; Essed 1991). This includes through language or accent discrimination (Hill 2009) or manifests itself based on skin tone with darker skinned Latinas/os experiencing disadvantages compared to their lighter counterparts (Hunter 2007; Murguia and Telles 1996; Telles and Murguia 1990). Even as middle class professionals, research has shown, Latinas/os continue to encounter discrimination in the workplace and in their civic participation (Chavez 2011).

As Feagin and Cobas (2014) write, "the major barriers to more substantial Latino incorporation into *numerous areas and levels* of our historically white institutions clearly involve whites' racial perspectives and associated discrimination." A central element of the continued racialization of Latinas/os, then, is the imposition of a white racial framing

of their group. The white racial frame is a predominant worldview that guides interpretations, behaviors, and practices among a majority of white Americans (Feagin 2010). Importantly, this worldview is hegemonic, permeating every aspect of social life in American society. Moving beyond dated concepts such as racial bias or individual level prejudices, the white frame includes racial stereotypes, narratives, images, emotions, and interpretations that guide discriminatory behaviors and actions. The dominant narrative of the white racial frame is the assumption that white superiority is justified for example, through hard work and achievement. This renders people of color as inferior, low-achieving, and thus undeserving because of an inferior cultural, biological, or other defining element. At base, the white racial frame enables framers to rationalize and justify the processes and outcomes of a systemically racist society. As a group, Latinas/os are perceived as criminal immigrants; outsiders, disreputable, diseased, animalistic, invaders to the morally and culturally pure American national body. To Latina/o students, as I show later, this means that they are treated as though they are inclined to be violent, prone to criminality, as well as sexually promiscuous, dirty, unintelligent, and uneducated. Indeed, as I find in this study, Latina/o college students and their families continue to face significant forms of racism at all stages of their educational paths, affecting their personal relationships, friendships, professional aspirations, self-perceptions, emotional well-being, and academic outcomes.

**Research on Latina/o Sororities and Fraternities**

Higher education researchers have examined how participation in Latina/o sororities and fraternities facilitates the panethnic Latina/o identity development among

members. That is, while many members of different ethnic groups joined a sorority or fraternity, group processes like sharing of culture, food, and language, resulted in a strengthened panethnic identity among members (Nuñez 2008, Guardia and Evans 2008; Muñoz and Guardia 2009). Sharing an organizational council comprised of co-ethnics and collaborating with other Latina/o-oriented organizations in creating programs and events also lead to an affirmed Latina/o identity. With these ethnic identity development processes occurring, it should be no surprise that others have found that Latina/o sororities and fraternities result in members experiencing a sense of cultural belonging within their organizational friendship circles (Moreno and Banuelos 2013).

At the same time, researchers have examined the potential for academic achievement that comes with extracurricular involvement in general, including in Latina/o sororities and fraternities (Moreno 2012; Garcia-McMillian 2009; Mendoza-Patterson 1998; Reyes 1997). This line of research has found that student involvement is associated with higher rates of graduation. In a parallel finding, researchers have found that Latina/o sororities and fraternities serve as vehicles for academic persistence by sharing goals and skills among the membership. By learning and sharing soft skills such as time management, organizational leadership, public speaking, conflict management, in addition to receiving emotional and motivational support from other members, Latina sororities provide "academic capital," which translates into academic persistence for members (Orta, Murguia, Cruz, forthcoming). While these studies have made important contributions to our understanding of Latina/o student academic performance, little research has addressed these themes together, for after all, Latina/o sororities and

fraternities exist almost entirely at predominantly white universities, and are comprised primarily of Latina/o students. This study takes a critical lens to examine the racialized social and academic experiences of Latina/o college students in an effort to better understand the obstacles and support for Latina/o educational success.

**Research Design**

In this study, I draw from data collected through mixed qualitative methods, including in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and one focus group. Together, these methods facilitate in-depth analysis of individual and collective narratives about students' shared educational experiences, group processes and shared culture, and patterned behavior related to the social and academic experiences of Latina/o students. Data collected in these ways provided vivid portraits of racial experiences as they are operationalized in daily life, the experiences of these racialized bodies, and the relationship between the lived experiences of these members and the power of systemic racism.

I collected interviews at three sites, including one university in the Midwest that I call Midwest Public University (MPU), and two in the Southwest (Southern Technical University, Southwestern State University). I selected these sites based on access to respondents. I initially sent an email to the presidents of sorority and fraternity presidents that I located on online university directories. Initially, I received little response from organizations. After conducting initial interviews, I asked respondents to refer a friend from their organization and another organization. After a few initial interviews, referred respondents were eager to participate in the study. Many

respondents even offered to liaison with other organizations to refer more respondents. I elected to conduct interviews at a site in a different state as a comparison.

In total, I draw from 42 in-depth interviews, in addition to data collected using other methods. I conducted an initial set of 10 interviews in Spring 2013 at Midwest University. I resumed interviews in Fall of 2014 and completed final interviews in April 2015. During this period, I travelled between the two sites in the Southwest conducting a majority of the interviews at these two sites. Most interviews were conducted at university affiliated spaces such as the student center or at coffee shops near the campus that the respondent was affiliated with. Interviews typically lasted between 1.5 - 2.5 hours. Following each interview, I began to transcribe and develop initial code groups related to the experiences described in each interview.

Interviews were employed in this project because they allowed the researcher to guide the line of questioning and the topics of conversations (Creswell 2009). In-depth interviews also reveal participants' interpretation of their personal narratives and life experiences. Because I sought detailed, personal accounts of racialized experiences, as well as the meaning respondents placed on these experiences (Creswell 2009) this data collection method was the most appropriate. Interviews were semi-structured, containing open-ended questions to guide conversation. As Islam (2000) writes, "open-ended questions [allow us] to analyze how [respondents'] structured discourses on race and how they defined *race* and *racism,* to identify disruptions and continuity in their narratives, and to see what kinds of situations brought on racialized narratives. This process maximized discovery and description." (Islam 2000: 39). In this way we can see

how, in seeking to highlight the lived experiences of respondents and to identify themes that can reveal the importance of race, interviews were instrumental to addressing the research questions.

In addition to interviews, this project relies on data collected through participant observation. I began conducting participant observation in August of 2014 and concluded September 2015. Throughout the period, I attended official and unofficial events, hangouts, and meetings with when invited. Though I attended a number of events at both Southern Technical University and Southwestern State University, most of my time was spent with members of the Tau Fraternity chapter at Southern Technical University. During observation, I would keep discreet notes on major interactions or stories told. After each period of observation, I would return home to my computer to write down events as they occurred, and to write memos or reports on patterns that I identified or questions that came to mind as I reflected on the observation period. As the members of Phi fraternity became more comfortable with me, and I was able to often times audio record our outings to group dinners or lunches. During some observation periods I was able to audio record, after each of these sessions I would transcribe and code these recordings. During winter and summer breaks when students returned home I kept in touch with members through text messaging and social media, remaining updated on major events or milestones related to members or the chapter.

As opposed to "thin description," which details facts without detailed explanation, ethnography yields "thick description" (Geertz 1973; 1994) that conveys a detailed interpretation of culture. As a group with shared culture, Latina/o sororities and

fraternities provided an opportunity to identify shared experiences as well as patterned social behavior. For Latino college students, these take place at the university. Participant observation can offer great insights into the lived experiences of Latina/o college students in their college environment. Latina/o sororities and fraternities also have a shared subculture among their organizations that draws from their culture and group history (Olivas 2012).

Finally, I conducted one focus group with the members of one fraternity. While all the focus participants were members of the same fraternity, they attended nearby universities that are not included in the interview or participant observation sample. This was beneficial because it allowed me to explore whether significant differences existed within a given fraternity. Focus groups provide a productive avenue for researching shared experiences associated with race and racism. Within the same fraternity, there are shared meanings and experiences. In specific, Twine suggests, although this method's strengths in researching race is not often emphasized in research methods courses, focus groups can provide "increased access to a wide range of discussions…" (Twine 2000). In fact, Twine writes, "it was in these [focus] group settings that we discovered the powerful salience of race, and the synergistic feature of discussions about race-related topic" (Twine 2000). That is, the group dynamic itself, especially when both the researcher and the group share a racial identity, yields data that might not become readily available outside of group interviews. More importantly however, race itself as a concept within these all-the-same race groups has a special data-yielding potential. The author writes, "while focus group research acknowledges the special role of the 'group

process' in mining certain truths that do not come out in individual interviews, race as a concept is not taught as having this special synergistic feature in getting at a collective version of reality" (Twine 2000). In this way, focus groups are particularly valuable for this study because they can help us get at the collective reality of the group, including where there is continuity and disagreement in the group surrounding racial meanings, racist experiences, and racial worldviews.

Utilizing these qualitative data collection methods together enables me to provide a nuanced account of Latina/o college students in a systemically racist higher education system. Because systemic racism operates at the macro and micro levels, an in-depth analysis of Latina/o student experiences in white universities would require multiple research methods. Ethnography provided me with an understanding of how Latina/o sororities and fraternities operate, how members interact, and what they accomplish as a group. By participating and observing sorority and fraternity activities, I was able to see Latina/o student culture and behavior in action in predominantly white universities that reproduce gross racial inequality. In-depth interviews allowed me to query why Latina/o sorority and fraternity members believed they did what they did. Allowed me to understand the meaning did they ascribe to their actions, their role in the university, and in their organizations. Interview data explain how Latina/o college students grapple with understanding and eventually rejecting a dominant white racial framing of the university. Focus groups with fraternity members allowed me to further draw out the salience of experiences shared by Latina/o students. Through this method, I was able to explore how frequently and consistently events occurred, and what meaning students ascribed to

events. In a sense, focus groups operated as a reliability check since it contained members from three different predominantly white universities and two Hispanic Serving Institutions.

**Analysis and Procedures**

Coding and analysis began with a close reading of the transcribed data. I then processed the data using the ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software package. ATLAS.ti was selected based on its ability to manage large amounts of textual data. I uploaded typed interview transcriptions, memos, and field notes into the software, and then, using a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Straus 1967), I organized and sorted content according to broad thematic groups I discovered upon initial readings the raw data. Once themes were categorized into broad thematic groups, I focused themes into sub-categories that allowed me to uncover patterns and relationships among processes and concepts. My goal during this process was to accurately and thoroughly describe any co-present phenomena in respondents' academic and social experiences at their university. The patterns and relationships between concepts and themes were the basis for analysis.

**The Research Sites**

I conducted interviews with the members of multiple sororities and fraternities (see appendix for detailed list) at three historically white, academically selective universities. One of the universities is located in the Midwest, I give it the pseudonym of Midwestern University. The other two universities are located in the Southwest, I give them the pseudonyms of University of the Southwest and Southern Technical

University. The majority of my observation comes from the two sites in the southwest, especially that of Southern Technical University. All three of the universities are is a large, historically white, academically selective public universities.

At the time of data collection, Midwest Public University (MPU) had a total of approximately 33,000 undergraduate students. Of the total number of undergraduate students at MPU, whites made up 43.94% of the population, international students, 24%, Asians, 15%, Latinas/os, 8.78%, and blacks, 5%. Southern Technical University (Southern Tech), the largest of the three universities, had approximately 50,000 students, with whites making up 64% of the student body, Latinas/os, 22%, international, 8%, Asians, 6%, and blacks, 4%. The University of the Southwest (U of S) had approximately 40,000 undergraduate students, of which whites made up 46% of the population, Latinas/os, 22%, Asians, 18%, international, 5%, and blacks, 4%. In all three of the universities, Native American and multiracial students, significantly smaller, made up the rest of the student population.

**Sample Description**

The sample of 43 respondents included nearly half women (20) and half men (23). Of the respondents, 17 attended Southern Technical University, 16 attended University of the Southwest, and 10 attended Midwest Public University. Six organizations are represented in the sample, including four sororities and two fraternities. Approximately 28 of the sample was Low Income or Working Class based on their parents' occupations. Markedly, 81 percent (35 respondents) were the first in their family to attend college (neither parent completed a college degree). Finally, 9

respondents were transfer students. Concerning distribution of statuses, there were no distinguishing patterns or concentrations of any one of the categories among any organization or institution. However, there were slightly more men represented among the low income / working class (15 of 28) and first generation categories; of the 8 respondents who had at least one parent attend college, 5 were women and 3 were men. Appendixes A through D contains tables listing the sample descriptives.

**Study Outline**

In Chapter 2, I begin by describing how Latina/o college students experienced a prevalent sense of *racialized nonbelonging* at the university. While previous research has examined how nonbelonging, in the form of attachment to campus, can be an academically discouraging process, racial nonbelonging refers to their inability to see themselves as an integral part of the university they attend, a more profound emotional and psychological racial marginalization. Racial nonbelonging resulted from their initial feelings of culture shock as well as a lack of racial diversity at their university. Students then reported nonbelonging often occurring at the same time that they were made aware of their racialization through elements of the predominant white racial frame about their group. Respondents felt that they were unable to relate to their white peers and friends in any meaningful way, social bonds that they felt they needed. I also find that racial nonbelonging is tied to exposure to *racist aggressions* from peers, professors, and higher education professional at their university. Finally, together racial alienation, racist aggressions and racial exclusion from social and academic spheres prevented

respondents' social integration into their university; an academically discouraging process.

In Chapter 3, I argue that Latina/o students' presence and membership of predominantly white universities is often delegitimated when their status as students is drawn into question. As a result, Latina/o college students are made more aware of the institution's unwillingness to address Latina/o issues and thus, they lose their connection to their university. Paying close attention to sociological conceptualizations of "*space"* and *"place"* and their connection to personal and social identities, I advance that universities constitute a *white racial place*. Taken together, the dynamics of a white racial place prevent Latina/o students from fully and clearly identifying with their university's identity.

Building on the findings of Chapters 2 and 2 together, in Chapter 4 I examine the role of Latina/o sororities and fraternities in the educational paths of their members. I demonstrate how Latina/o sororities and fraternities operate as comprehensive support groups for their members by validating their experiences and by reinforcing the sources of motivation that members have for pursuing higher education: their family and community. I find that respondents cited the *sacrifices and struggles* experienced by their family as a key motivation in their choice to continue their education. I then examine how because a majority of the respondents have had family members that have made unsuccessful attempts to obtain a post-secondary education, causing respondents to view their educational paths as the culmination of their family's and community's struggles – respondents viewed their role as a college student as their family and

community's last hope for a better quality of life. I argue that drawing on *narratives of sacrifice and struggle* serves as a form of *educational motivation* for students. In this way, respondents draw from their cultural experiences and backgrounds to advance their education. I conclude the chapter by examining how Latina/o sororities and fraternities provided support for members' educational persistence by validating students' experiences and strengthening personal relationships with other university students. Importantly, this process enables members to support each other by providing mentorship and advice from relatable and trustworthy sources. Sorority and fraternity members provided advice that reinforced the family sacrifice and community struggle as educational motivation.

In Chapter 5, I examine how Latino college students accomplish resistance through persistence in predominantly white universities. Since the university is a place where Latina/o students experience racialized nonbelonging, then Latina/o sororities and fraternities allow students to experience racialized belonging within the university. Within sororities and fraternities, Latina/o students could experience political solidarity with persons with whom they could forge authentic relationships with based on shared values and goals. While Latina/o sorority and fraternity members do not participate in radical politics that attempt to revolutionize the university, they participated in efforts that transformed the racial landscape of the university by sometimes forcefully infusing and incorporating Latina/o culture and identity into the university spaces and curriculum. In the classroom, this means that Latino college students find themselves the lone voice of antiracism, questioning the racist ideologies that dominate the classroom. At the

organizational level, organizations *built bridges into the university* for more Latinas/os to potentially attend one day. In this way, the organizations attempted to incorporate their communities into the university by creating programs that physically brought members of the local Latino community into the heart of the white racial place: central campus spaces.

In the same chapter, I conclude with a summary of the main findings and suggestions for future work, including the implications of this research for higher education policy makers, administrators, and practitioners. In sum, as much as it focuses on the experiences of Latina/os in college, this project advances our understanding of whiteness and white racism at the core of predominantly white universities; my data suggest that a white identity and the university identity are both in everyday and profound terms, one in the same. I suggest that future research incorporate the growing number of Hispanic Serving Institutions and examine how race and racism operate for Latina/o students in these places. Today, university agents, that is, administrators, professors, decision makers, and white students are positions in which whites are overrepresented. As the country becomes increasingly multicultural and, especially increasingly Latina/o, university agents will need to make significant changes to fully embrace this demographic and cultural shift in their student body.

# CHAPTER II

# FACING RACIST AGGRESSIONS AND RACIALIZED NONBELONGING IN COLLEGE

In this chapter, I outline the extensive process of *racialized nonbelonging* that results from Latina/o students feeling like outsiders in their university community. I explain how, in addition to experiencing a commonplace "culture shock," upon transitioning to college, Latina/o students reported feeling overwhelmed by the significant lack of diversity at the university. The lack of diversity, which many respondents described as an overrepresentation of whites in the university, caused students to feel uncomfortable in their new setting. This discomfort is exacerbated by respondents' increased awareness of the white racial framing of their group. Respondents described numerous interactions where they were reminded of their racialized status within the university or in society writ large and they described feeling strong emotional reactions to the white racial framing of their group. Subsequently, respondents also described having experienced intense forms of racial alienation from their white peers along racialized class and cultural lines, finding that they could not relate with their white peers beyond superficial interactions. I conclude the chapter by presenting examples of what I term, *racist aggressions*. Racist aggressions refer to both direct and indirect forms of racial discrimination that serve to remind the target of their subordinate social position either using racial epithets or harmful elements of the white racial frame. Finally, if respondents' feelings of racialized nonbelonging were not

comprehensive enough after having experienced racist aggressions, then it was cemented in interactions of racial exclusion from social and academic spheres at their university. Summarily, racialized nonbelonging served as a major obstacle toward Latina/o student integration into their college.

**Transitioning to College and Institutional Integration**

Before describing the findings, an introduction to research on the role of institutional integration is necessary. The prevalent explanatory model in higher education research for educational persistence in college is that posited by Tinto (1975; 1988). As others have noted, Tinto's "model of institutional departure" represented a shift in higher education research away from retention (institutional efforts for retaining students) toward educational persistence (students' decisions to remain at their institution until graduation). This theory frames our current understanding of educational persistence in research and advances the following multi-stage process: a new college student makes a commitment to graduate from their chosen institution, interacts with agents representing the academic and social apparatus of the university, then becomes integrated academically and socially into the institution, re-commits to their goal and to their institution, and then makes a decision to persist or nonpersist in college.

Building on this framework, Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991) studying Latina/o and Native American students at a university in the U.S. Southwest argued that ethnic identity and culture is central to the process of social integration into the university. Importantly, in their study, ethnic pride provided students with the basis for social integration and educational persistence. Other researchers have drawn into

question the applicability of Tinto's (1975; 2000) framework for Latina/o students, suggesting that the model does not work for Latina/o students as they face a "negative racial campus climate" based on their experiences with "racial microaggressions" (Yosso, et al. 2009). Building on research that focuses analyses on culture, ethnicity, and racial backgrounds, this chapter finds how Latina/o students experience in-depth *racialized nonbelonging* as a significant obstacle for social integration and thus persistence at their university.

**The White Racial Framing and Racialization of Latinas/os**

The racialization of Latinas/os occurs in a societal context wherein white racism has continued to reproduce and reinforce a white supremacist racial hierarchy. As previous scholars have examined, how Latinas/os have been racialized has depended largely on their social, economic, or political utility for whites in the time period in which they have been *Othered* (Molina 2013; Chavez 2008; Gomez 2007; Ngai 2003; Ramos-Zayas and DeGenova 2003; Haney-Lopez 1996; Montejano 1987; Barrera 1979). In general, however, we cannot overlook the fact that a consistent historical theme has been the oppression of Latinas/os in the service of white racial privilege and power. In this way, over the course of the last 200 years in which Latinas/os have become increasingly woven into the fabric of U.S. economic, political, and cultural spheres, so has the anti-Latino white racial framing of them (Feagin 2010; 2006).

Today, U.S. society is profuse with anti-Latina/o narratives (formulaic tropes or stereotypes), racialized images, racial stories, stigmatized languages and accents, and negative racial emotions that together constitute a white racial framing of Latinos. As I

describe in Chapter 1, the white racial frame refers to a broad racialized worldview that rationalizes and justifies the processes associated with and outcomes of a systemically racist society. Ultimately, the anti-Latina/o sub-frame of a broader white racial frame enables whites to rationalize and justify the oppression of people of color generally, and Latinas/os specifically. In fact, I find that the white racial framing of their group was an overwhelmingly common experience for Latina/o students in this study. It was through the white racial framing of their group that Latina/o students experienced both direct and indirect racist aggressions that would reinforce feelings of nonbelonging.

**The Racialized Nonbelonging of Latinas/os at Predominantly White Universities**

Distinct from social integration, an in-depth analysis of student academic and social experiences throughout their time in college demonstrates that Latina/o students undergo an intense and at times painful process of *racialized nonbelonging*. First, Latino students experience culture shock. Then they experience a shock of the significant lack of diversity and over-representation of white students at their university. They describe how they have been racialized through the white racial frame by their white peers; including a number of instances where they were made aware of the status of their racial identity group. Additionally, I find that racial nonbelonging is tied to racial alienation from white peers. Racial alienation refers to the racialized class and cultural anti-Latina/o segregation that occurs in college. This refers to Latina/o students' inability to relate or connect with white peers in a meaningful way that allows them to create positive personal social relationships in college. To further cement racial nonbelonging, respondents faced significant forms of racist aggressions from white peers, professors,

and higher education professionals that caused them significant obstacles. Finally, to add insult to injury, respondents described a number of ways in which Latinas/os are excluded from social and academic settings that could provide further opportunities for integration into their college and future success.

**Culture Shock in Transitioning to College**

Research on the adjustment to college has examined how college students experience culture shock, that is, having a surprised and disoriented reaction to new and strange environments to which they are not accustomed. Much of this research has examined students participating in study abroad programs and how they experience to culture shock (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham 2005). The literature identifies key factors that lead to the disorienting element of culture shock including differences in environment, language, communication, and surroundings (Goldstein and Keller 2015; Cushman 2007). Research on Latina/o college students has also demonstrated that many often experience feelings of loneliness, nervousness, and anxiety about being away from home for the first time as a key element of culture shock (Orta, Murguia, and Cruz, Forthcoming). Clearly, based on previous models on college student transition and integration into the institution, one may conclude that students undergoing a transition to college would experience a normal culture shock. Ultimately, following logic, predominant theories may also conclude that this results in students later becoming incorporated into their university.

Respondents in this study experienced many of feelings of anxiety as a result of culture shock. These experiences can be attributed to the large size of the university, the

new and unfamiliar social setting, as well as personal differences in experiences and personality (for introverted personalities). For example, when I asked Valeria, a second-year Communications student at U of S about her transition to college we shared the following exchange:

> DO: What was it like when you first came to campus here for you? What was your experience?
>
> Valeria: Hmm. I was really scared; the campus is so big and I'm shy and so I was like-- everybody talked to people or I was always like scared like that people were here already and that their cliques were already set …
>
> DO: Mhm.
>
> Valeria: So, I was scared and then I started meeting other people and opening up to people, but I still get scared... it's still a big campus.

The large size of the college and the pre-existing social networks that existed were intimidating for Valeria. If a respondent is introverted, it could be especially challenging for new students. For example, when I asked Valeria's chapter sister Ana at U of S to describe her first year in college, she stated:

> (Laughs) Yeah, freshman year was definitely a struggle, definitely freshman year. I felt so out of place everywhere I guess, 'cos I couldn't talk to anyone, I was very like, to myself.

Being introverted also may play a role in students' incorporation into the university. Some students may also struggle to find their social group even within the same major. This could depend on relatability but also on shared interests. Second-year Communications major Heidy also talked about how she sometimes felt like she did not be belong at U of S largely because she did not share the same experiences and interests as her classmates. She explained,

> At least for my communications major classes, everyone knows a lot more in like their fields. Right now, I'm taking a class where we're filming and like making stuff and they're very into that and I'm not interested in like filming and anything like that. So, I feel like they have a lot of experiences that I don't feel like I belong for that reason.

Even as a second-year student, Heidy notes that she sometimes finds it difficult to find common ground with her classmates. She notes that she doesn't feel like she belongs in some of her classes for that reason. This can be difficult, especially as students often seek to become socially integrated somehow into their college. Reflecting back on her college transition, Ivana, a fourth-year student at STU notes how she felt lonely upon attending college her first year. She explained,

> Um, so I hadn't, I had no friends when I got here and I felt like really, I guess, alone. I didn't join, like, any clubs or organizations up to sophomore year…

Heidy felt lonely her first year and did not join any extra-curricular activities or groups until her second year where she was likely able to gain a sense of belonging, i.e. where she became integrated into her university.

To be sure, students reported a variety of experiences when it came to their personality and their institutional integration process. Many of these individual experiences can be attributed largely to both individual personalities as well as typical feelings that occur as a result of beginning a new setting. However, as I demonstrate below, this process also had a *racialized dynamic* for Latina/o students. In particular, the following section demonstrates how respondents in this study are racialized minorities transitioning into predominantly white universities, a fact which also plays a major role in their experiences.

**"Where are all the Latinos?" A Lack of Diversity and White Dominance on Campus**

Respondents reported having experienced a significant culture shock upon attending college but beyond an initial transition to a new environment, they quickly became sharply aware of the fact that they were *racialized* minorities at a predominantly white university. From the perspectives of respondents, their feelings of nonbelonging are a result of a lack of racial and ethnic diversity at their university. More specifically, respondents indicated that white racial dominance of the demographic composition of the university caused feelings of anxiety and nonbelonging among Latinas/os. For example, Luciana, a fourth-year student majoring in Youth Development Studies at Southern Tech frequently mentioned that even as a senior, she values when she is able to see other Latinas/os in her classes. She said, "I get really excited whenever there is another Latino person in my classes. I don't really usually have any in my major. There's very very few." Ramiro, a fourth-year majoring in Social Work at U of S also noted that he continues to feel like he doesn't belong in his classes, given that there is a serious lack of Latina/o presence in his classes. He commented, "I still feel out-of-place simply given in the representation I see in like classrooms." For Ramiro, he notes that there is a significant lack of Latinos enrolled in his major courses at U of S.

Many respondents echoed statements like these, explaining that their transition into college life was severely challenged when they added in the shocking lack of diversity in their university. For example, Uriel stated,

> When I got accepted here, it was, you know, it was a major transition from what it was before, how can you say -- there wasn't a lot of white people before,

> basically. And then when I came here -- white people! It's like, I didn't know, I had a different style of dress, speech, and … it was a little bit harder … it was like a cultural shock when I got here basically. It was different… I came here and I had a large black hoodie, you know, the way I dressed, the mannerisms, the way I talked, like coming here I remember I met a lot of people and … But it was an interesting transition to that because walking around it was just weird not seeing a lot of brown people at first. Not knowing anybody in my classes. I'm the first in my family to go to college so, it's very, a lil' bit emotional at the start of it. But I got used to it eventually …

Whereas one may take Uriel's comments to suggest that this feeling may have lessened as time progresses and students like him became more comfortable with their college setting, this was not the case. Several respondents suggested that they were only able to become comfortable in university settings after searching for what little communities of color existed there. When I first asked Ramiro if he ever felt out of place being at SSU, he responded:

> I feel it even more now then- then I did before. Uhm, and part of it is just-- it might just be mainly my major (laughs) uh, 'cos you know like … I am like one of four- five guys in the whole- the whole class and on top of that, you know, I am like the only one of two guys who are- or one of like two or three people who are Latino, you know so in my classes I do feel that way. Like even my Child Psychology class, so it's like I'm- I'm the only guy Latino in there.

Ramiro noted that in his current classes, he remains a racial and gender minority, causing him to feel out of place. At the same time, he was very clear about how he perceived the diversity that does exist as having provided him with the opportunity to meet people of different backgrounds while at the same time, this remaining a structurally inequitable process. The following discussion demonstrates this point:

> Ramiro: I mean you know like U of S prides itself on diversity. You know, it's like you know we- we want equal representation of- of all like many groups as possible. And I mean you do see it- you do see it. You know like whenever I came to U of S like I was cultured shocked 'cos I was like "oh crap," you know, "there's, there is diversity you know like there is a lot more Asian, and Middle

> Eastern, and Indian individuals on campus, which I never encountered before, you know?...
>
> DO: Mhm.
>
> Ramiro: But, you know, you do see the diversity, but then you know it's unequal - it's unequal in terms of like where these certain bodies are on campus, you know. Umm like, like you know like there's more bodies … uhm a disparity of black bodies on campus. And it's like oh, like black bodies are seen a lot in athletic programs you know- football, basketball, but they are never seen in the classroom. You know so, that's kind of like the same way I began to see you know like how things are, you know. And so, I mean but when I came in you know like I was cultured shocked but then as you know time progressed I was just like you know, diversity, it's kind of a lie, you know?

Importantly, Ramiro notes that although he had met people from different backgrounds that he'd never met before entering college, diversity in college also represented inequitable race relations in how students' bodies are physically and numerically represented in the university programs.

Respondents critiques of how the university lacked diversity was not limited to the student body. For example, Dolores, a second-year at U of S also discussed how she felt that there was a lack of representation of diverse perspectives in her course on public speaking, a requirement for her major, even when talking about Cesar Chavez, an iconic leader for Latina/o labor rights. She stated:

> Dolores: Uhm, it was more of like vague discussion, kind of just talking about his rhetoric alone like the structure of his speech and, you know, like, the logistics of what he actually said, um, rather than, like, the overall message or, like, why he was saying it. You know, like, nobody really touched on that, on, like, the context behind what he was doing and I guess that's kind of what, like, made me kind of speak up a little bit because I'm just like "no, like we talk about why everything happens for every other speaker, why don't ya'll want to like, talk about it?"
>
> DO: Uh-huh.

> Dolores: And I was looking forward to it, too, because I was, like, oh my gosh it's, like, the first Latino, you know, speaker that we're going to talk about and he was the only one, by the way. The only one. Uhm, so I guess that's kind of what drew my attention, "no, let's talk about him a little more." Let's not cut off the conversation so quickly.

For Dolores, it was not only about the fact that there were so few Latinas/os at U of S, but also that the curriculum did not contain Latina/o relevant experiences and perspectives included. Dolores emphasized that she did not want to move on from the section of the course where the content examined the role of an iconic Latina/o leader and the historical context that lead to his prominence. The inclusion of Cesar Chavez could be viewed as a form of representation for Dolores, given that it was the only Latina/o leader included in the course that covered American leaders' speech patterns.

Curriculum content and area concentrations had significant impacts on how Latinos experienced the demographics of their university. Andres, a fifth-year Latina/o Studies major at U of S explains how switching from computer engineering to his current major allowed him to find a sense of belonging. He said,

> It wasn't until I switched my major to history and I started taking more Latino, um, like, Latino studies classes or, um, Latin American politics classes that I started seeing my own people and I was like oh, okay, you know, like, like I felt more like I belonged. It's crazy. Even my, uhm, my roommate, he's told me the same thing. He was, I think math or something, and he was kind of like, "dang, like where are all the, the Latinos in these classes?" and then he switched over to Mexican American studies and, like, that's where a lot of Latinos tend to, to go towards. You know, and he's like "oh, okay, all right. Like now I feel more, you know, like I'm with my own people." Um, but yeah, as far as socially, yeah, I always felt that, like, I did have, uhm, I always felt at ease because I was with my, my own people … Because I found them right away …

Andres found that being in one of the concentrations with more Latinas/os allowed him and his roommate to feel more comfortable. Echoing some of the same observations in

the following conversation, Sebastian, a second-year Sociology major at Southern Tech, explains how isolating it was to be a chemistry major to the point where it made him question whether he made the right choice in attending Southern Technical University.

> Sebastian: Uhm, my first semester here I had chemistry so, like, right away I saw that there was no *raza* whatsoever. There was this one girl, um, she, she had a shirt from the university back home. Uhm, so I'm like "oh, she's from back home, I want to talk to her." Never did. And I still see her around, but never spoke to her at all. Besides that, a lot of white people. I always try to get there early because it was a huge class. I think there were like a little bit over 300 students, uhm, but I was a math major at the time so I didn't, there was not a lot of *raza*, so I didn't really talk to anybody. Yup.
>
> DO: And how did that make you feel in those classes?
>
> Sebastian: (Pauses) Kind of, what's that word when, when you don't feel welcome. Uhm, excluded, no. (Pauses) I'm going to say excluded. Kind of ex-excluded por que, like, back home, even in my county, because I'm doing a project and I'm seeing, like, how many Hispanics compared to whites there are in different counties, like there's like 92, 93% Hispanics, so I don't really see a lot of white people. So, coming to a place where, like, I don't know, close to 70, or like 62% is white, um, I'm just like, "whoa. What happened here?" Um, then in like a huge class, like I only ever saw that one girl and so, I didn't, um, I didn't, I didn't feel, I'm just like, "damn," like, (groans). I regret it, not really looking into, like the, the stats on this school, like what, um, what percentage there was of blacks, whites, Hispanics, etcetera. *I might have gone to another school if I had known how it was here.*

Sebastian describes how his experience in his freshman year was an isolating one. Additionally, just as many other respondents have stated that diversity was superficial at best, from Sebastian's point of view, the prevalent numerical dominance of white students and lack of Latinas/os in his classes caused him to even question whether he made the right choice to attend Southern Tech.

It is important to note that while the availability of racial diversity was relatively nonexistent for these students, after taking extra steps to find a less racially-homogenous

setting within the university, respondents were able to find some comfort. For example, Adriana explained,

> My first time coming to orientation was kind of scary, demographically, like I was used to seeing a good mixture of people and I was still kind of disappointed by the number of Latinos here, so it was just a big culture shock. I lived in Burnside Dormitory freshman year, so it was still kind of some comfort because it was mostly black people so there was some sense of comfort, but I think just going out to like classes and being in classes, it was still disappointing to be like the lone wolf - like mostly the only one Latina there, you know, maybe another or two, at the most.

Adriana explains that she felt a strong sense of disappointment that she could not find other Latinas/os in her classes but found comfort in the nonwhite numerical presence of minorities in her dormitory. Importantly, she noticed that there was not racial diversity at the university at her orientation.

This dynamic also often takes a cultural turn when students feel that they cannot find someone who values and shares their culture. For example, when I asked Luciana what her experience was the first time she came to the STU campus, she replied with some hesitation:

> Uhm. Fine? (skeptical tone) I mean, I think for -- I guess it was a culture shock. 'Cos I didn't really have anyone to like, not having my family, *I didn't have anyone to share my culture with*. My roommate was white but she came from a really Latino community. But she wasn't like really a part of it. Anyways, she kind of understood how it would be sometimes… Um. I mean, I dunno. *I kind of knew it but I didn't think it was gonna be so bad.*

Luciana notes that even though her white roommate was familiar with her culture, she did not share the culture with Luciana. Brandi shares many of the same sentiments as Luciana in that they both experienced a shock not only as many students do when it comes to attending college for the first time, but specifically in response to the

significant lack of diversity on their college campus. Brandi shares how she felt upon attending Southern Tech:

> At that time, it bothered how there wasn't minorities, but of course that's what a minority is, there's not a lot of students… I was still freaked out at how many white students were on our campus, and then I realized well, I got to STU, right in the middle of nowhere- you know, what do I expect? Uhm the good thing about my freshman year though is that being in a First-Generation Student Learning Community, I was accepted into the pre-med program through that, and within that program we had a lot of diversity in there, so that's kind of what eased whatever tension I had when it came to race, it just- it made me realize well there are people like me, who probably see the same things like me. We got along really easily, so like, it was fine.

Brandi and Adriana from earlier found that they were able to find comfort when they located social and academic spheres that were more racially diverse, i.e. with fewer whites than the rest of the university. Luciana had the same experience, for example, when she joined a religious choir.

> I was in choir for three years and I was also a part of a church group and in neither one of those groups I've felt as comfortable as I do now being surrounded by a lot of Hispanics, by my sorority sistersm, or by BGC (Black Greek Council) people. *So I have found a lot more comfort in this social-group-wise.* Being in my sorority or being able to involved in what my sorority is involved in. But before, well, no, choir I felt really comfortable *because it was really diverse*. But uhm. That was freshman, sophomore, and junior year. That was a really good group. But I just wanted something like us more. I wanted that home away from home, like people understanding me like from the culture that I grew up in …
>
> I got interested in Alpha Sorority because beginning of junior year I kind of went through a mini-depression. I kind felt isolated from everybody and I felt like I didn't have a group other than choir or whatever. And so I went to, I remember going, finding information, I went to all the booths [at an open house event], I kept going around and then I went through and on the other side all the sororities or Greeks and then I talked to one of the people at Alpha Sorority and she was just really nice and she said, "hey, we're having an event tomorrow, you should come out." And so I did. And then afterward they invited me to go eat dinner and so I went to have dinner with them and it was really cool and I really liked it and I felt like we had stuff in common. I didn't really talk 'cos I was really shy, but

> hearing them and hearing how they talk and hearing how they act, like, made me feel really comfortable with them.
>
> DO: How did they talk?
>
> Luciana: You know, like joking and then they would say something then they'd be like, "tsk-ahh." You know, "tsk-ahh" (laughs).

Luciana describes how she found comfort in a diverse choir group but even then, still felt that she needed more culturally-specific support. This also points to the important role that the lack of racial and ethnic diversity played for respondents transition to college life. Echoing the isolating experiences of other respondents above, Luciana also mentions that she joined her sorority seeking culturally-relevant support. This is reflected even in how she views Latina/o speaking mannerisms and verbal interjections as a sign of cultural familiarity. Ultimately, diversity and Latina/o-oriented social groups were a significantly missing piece of Latina/o student integration into their college.

The availability of racial and ethnic diversity at the university as described by respondents suggests that, beyond simple culture shock in terms of new surroundings, racial demography of the university can play a major role in how Latina/o students view their belonging at predominantly white universities. Perhaps Guadalupe, a second-year international relations major at Southern Tech best describes how Latina/o students may feel upon arriving at a predominantly white university:

> I mean it was a big culture shock, uhm, really big. I was like, "where are all the Mexican people at? Where are all my people at?" and, uhm, it was very hard to adjust especially being in Military Club. Um, it was very, very hard to adjust. Uhm, but I ended up… I don't know, the first year was hard because, like, no one really understood where I came from and, like, everybody was very, (sighs) they're very protected, they come from very protective families. *They don't understand, like, what it's really like to be different, you know, to, uhm, like, not to be, to basically be judged, like, just by walking in, you know what I mean?*

> Um, they didn't really fully understand that. At that time, I thought, like, all of STU was like that and I was like, (sighs) "*I don't want to do this*" and, uhm, I don't know. Um, second semester, like, it just got better, uhm, like, my relationship with everyone, you know, it just, I finally realized, you know what, I don't care that I'm not like everyone else. I can be my own person and, uhm, but then I had to get out and it sucked and then I was back to square one. But, uhm, that's when I found Rho Sorority and then I realized, oh my gosh, there's people that are just like me that have, like, been experiencing the same feelings I have and yeah. It's just been a lot better.

Importantly, for Guadalupe, not only was it that she was racially "different," but it was important that no other students around her understood what that experience signified for her. At one point, the discomfort with racial homogeneity and dominance at Southern Tech was so overbearing that Guadalupe contemplated dropping out of college. Much like many other respondents, she found temporary comfort in a Latina/o organization where whites did not constitute the majority.

In this last quote, Guadalupe also begins to experience a sense of racial alienation she experienced with her white friends in the Military Club wherein she felt that they were unable to relate to her based on her cultural upbringing, her racial status, and their privileged or "protected" upbringing. As we will see later, Latina/o students experienced a significant sense of alienation based on their racialized class status. Importantly, Guadalupe also mentions how she was "judged" when she walked into a room to refer to how she is pre-judged based on pre-existing stereotypes, stories, and emotions about Latinas, in other words, how she was racially framed.

**Latina/o College Student Racialization through the White Racial Frame**

A central element of how Latina/o students experienced nonbelonging is by how they were racialized through a number of elements of the white racial frame.

Respondents consistently discussed interactions or events that reminded them of the salient white racial framing of their group. While these events reminded them of the white racial frame, for the most part, respondents were already aware of their racialized status and the associated meanings. Respondents also described having taken extensive measures to limit the negative effects of their racialization. Finally, many respondents explained their interpretation of the white racial framing of their group using emotional descriptions. This adds to the theoretical conceptualization of the white racial frame in that, while previous research has highlighted how framing people of color includes an emotional component, it does not include how framing also incites significant emotional reactions among racial minorities.

When respondents discussed their awareness of the white racial framing of their group, they often described how they viewed their status within the university. For example, as I walked to a study group with Ernesto, a third-year Architecture student at Southern Tech, we talked about his academic trajectory. He had a challenging transition to his current institution. He had transferred in from a community college where he had spent two years and had already spent another three years catching up with required classes at his present university. Ernesto explained that he still had another year and a half to go before he would graduate. All told, he will have spent approximately six and a half years on obtaining a bachelor's degree. When I asked him if he felt like he belonged at Southern Tech he said,

> When I'm here, I feel really uneducated. Like people look at me like I am uneducated. And then that's how I feel when I go home. There are times when, the way I pronounce things or what I say, doesn't come out right -- I feel like I haven't been educated right. Because you know, where I come from is low

> income, you know. But when I go home, there are times when someone tells me something and I'll think, (pauses) "wait, did you just say that *that* way?" Like they are uneducated. They make me look like I am a genius. But I really feel like that, here, people have had a better education than me, and *they can see that*.

Ernesto's experiences at Southern Technical University caused him to feel "less educated" than his peers. His insecurities allude to this belief that his pre-college education was inferior to his classmates. Ultimately, however, his explanation best demonstrates that his feelings stem from the fact that he is *viewed* as less educated or less prepared for college than his classmates. Similarly, other respondents reported having experienced an awareness about how they are being observed in the classroom or other university settings. For example, when I asked Uriel, a fourth-year History Major at Midwest Public University, about if he thought that being Mexican affected his experiences in college, he replied,

> Uriel: I have to think about it really, really, really thoughtfully, like, I would have to, like, think about it a lot, like, whatever, whatever I'm going to say in class, that it actually makes sense, you know? So, I'm thinking about it, is the teacher going to know what I'm saying? You know, because I get nervous and, and I speak and I don't know if I'm actually being clear enough of what I'm saying or if my argument is making sense or, uhm, I always have to think about that two or three times before I say something in the classroom and then thinking about it makes me not want to say it just because I think about it to myself and, like, "oh, that doesn't make sense. I shouldn't say anything," you know? While I just see other people and they just raise their hand and, and right away shout out their answer and I'm like okay, I guess so, and even though the teachers do try to make, like, the professors do try to make that environment with, like, you know, there's no right or wrong answers, but at the same time I feel like even if I say the wrong answer, like, I'm going to be looked up to as, like, oh, he doesn't know what he's saying, you know?
>
> DO: Do you think the fact that you're Mexican has something to do with that?
>
> Uriel: It does take it to another, uhm, another level, like, it's another factor that influences that because, like, if you see a classroom which is 90% white and then 10%, you know, Mexican or Latino then, like, they'll look at you different, they

> will look at you like, "oh, well finally, that Mexican talked in classroom," or something like that. So, I think definitely, race or the background does, does influence, like, the way the other people look at you.

In the classroom, especially when it came to participation, respondents were aware that their racial background would affect how their white peers and professors would interpret their behaviors. Especially in a predominantly white context, Latina/o students are aware that white peers would view their answers as always coming from a Latina/o with all the negative stereotypes that may come with their background. Respondents suggested that whites would call on elements of the white racial frame to interpret their participation in the class. When I asked Agustin the same question, we had the following discussion.

> Agustin: I would definitely - definitely say yeah just, just because even though, like, I might not felt the impact, like, right away, like, I feel it in the classroom, like, I want to speak, I want to, like, be involved in the classroom, but then since all my classmates are white then it makes me feel uncomfortable talking because I'm not sure If I'm saying, you know, I'm being, I'm saying it right what I'm saying or everything or does it even make sense or does it even mean something for me to say something in the classroom. So that definitely makes me feel like, I don't know, I'm not welcome or, or I'm not able to, to be comfortable enough to talk and say something in classroom just, *just because of who I am.*
>
> DO: Why do you think that is?
>
> Agustin: (Pauses) I, I mean, I feel like it's just the surroundings, you know? Like, looking other people and, and, and maybe thinking that they know what they are saying just because maybe they got a better education in high school or they're more prepared, um, once they come here to college and, and I mean, like, it just makes me feel uncomfortable even though sometimes I do get the confidence enough to talk in front of the classroom, like, I usually feel like I want to, but then I, I just don't do it.

Much the same as previous respondents, Agustin thought that his being Mexican invariably affected how his peers and professors would observe his participation in the

classroom. This ultimately affected his performance in the classroom. Agustin's explanation implies that most of his white peers have had a better education and, as a result, are more likely to be perceived as articulate and convincing in class discussions. In this way, Latina/o respondents and their educational preparedness were racially-framed from a white perspective, and this has had observable impacts on Latina/o student behavior.

Respondents were routinely aware of how they were viewed by whites. For Latinas/os who were not of Mexican descent, they were often racialized when white students mistook them for Mexican or Mexican American. The following interview excerpt demonstrates how Latinas/os have experienced their racialization through the assumption that they are all Mexican. I asked Valeria how she identified racially and if she had ever been confused for anything else in college. When she confirmed that she is often confused for Mexican, we had the following conversation:

> DO: How do you react when people confuse you for Mexican?
>
> Valeria: Uhm I say, "uhm no, I'm Puerto Rican…"
>
> DO: Oh okay, so do you see it as positive or negative?
>
> Valeria: I don't know, (laughs) I think sometimes- I- I think sometimes it irks me 'cos when I think about the whole stereotype -- that everyone who is Latino is Mexican or from Mexico or something…

Valeria was very familiar with the imposed racial homogenization that all Latinas/os are of Mexican descent. This is a commonly held stereotypes, especially in regions where Mexican Americans constitute the larger of the Latina/o subpopulations. In fact, Valeria

recalled a story that her father had shared with her family about his experiences facing the same assumption. She continued,

> My dad used to travel a lot to the bases in Arizona, it was like right after the whole Arizona law for [profiling] Hispanics. How they were like, if you look legal… and my dad was just -- he was scared to go and then when he was there he was telling us, "yeah, you could tell it was like really tense, yeah, all the Hispanics, and all the Hispanics were not out at a certain time, like after night time." Yeah, and so my dad was just like, "I would always be like looking around," 'cos he's like- he's like a fear of getting harassed by police. He was like, "and I can't believe it -- I'm Puerto Rican!" Since Puerto Rico is part of the U.S. territory, he's just like, "what if I say that I am from Puerto Rico and they don't believe me, and like, deport me?" and my dad is like -- he gets so mad – then he's like "I would like to see them try -- where are you going to deport me to? Back to *La Isla*?!" (laughs) ...but it's about how he's gonna be treated.

For Valeria, her father's story certainly points to the criminalization of Latinos that has been inscribed into law in many U.S. states. She also recognizes that there is a connection between how her father will be *racially* profiled by police and how she is often confused for Mexican. The common link is the stereotyping and racial homogenization of all Latinas/os.

The fact that many respondents were often assumed to be Mexican demonstrates how widespread the racialization of Latinos is. For example, Nataly describes how she responds when other students, mainly whites, ask what her racial background is,

> Nataly: Um, normally I tell them "well, I'm Latina," and I like to pinpoint that I'm Salvadorian because lots of people generalize and it's, you know, you're Hispanic or Latina, they automatically assume you're Mexican. And that's not always the case. There's so many different, you know, um, ethnicities.
>
> DO: Uh-huh.
>
> Nataly: And, uhm, so I, I like to make a point of saying that I'm Salvadorian because that is a big part of my life. I grew up Salvadorian … we're different and, uhm, so I take pride in being Salvadorian.

For Nataly, many of her white peers have assumed that she, much like many other Latinos, was of Mexican background. This process of homogenization reduces the diverse backgrounds of Latinos to one stigmatized group – Mexican Americans. This is further demonstrated in an interaction I had with Oscar, a third-year education major at U of S. He had recently gotten into a vehicular collision with a white woman student. He described how the woman was at fault and admitted so. Oscar assumed that was apparently of a wealthy background based on the fact that she drove a luxury vehicle. After he described how he was rear ended by her, he went on to talk about how her father called him directly to negotiate the terms of the insurance claim. He explained,

> He tried to get me to go off the books, he wanted to pay cash for the damages. But I knew that he just didn't want his rates to go up. I wanted to go through everything legit. So I had to explain to him, like, "look, I'm a college student, my insurance is under my dad's name," I had to tell him that so he wouldn't think I'm just *some random Mexican*.

Oscar understood that Mexican Americans face significant stigmas in the U.S. Importantly, he notes that his name and the fact that his daughter had already met him, he would be received as "just some random Mexican." In this way, we can see how Latina/o students are racialized as sometimes as Mexican alone other times by drawing from broader white racial frames about Latina/o inferiority in intelligence, income, and culture.

Just as Latinas/os faced interactions where they were racialized through elements of the white racial frame, we can see the presence of white racial frame in the significant emotional reactions that Latinas/os have when discussing issues around race and discrimination. In fact, the white racial framing of Latinas/os incited several emotional

reactions among respondents. In addition to fear, respondents reported having feeling anger, sadness, and hope in the face of the white racial framing of their group. Valeria, as mentioned above, is aware of the structural position of Latinas/os. Concerning her family, she says that she is constantly in fear because of the systemic racism that exists within the criminal justice system.

> Valeria: There's still racism even though people don't want to talk about it but before people were like "oh, there's no racism. People just think they're just against them." It's like there kind of is; racism is never going to go away, no matter what you do.
>
> D: How does that affect Latinos do you think?
>
> Valeria: I feel like that with all minorities because, well blacks and Hispanics are the ones that mostly get sent to jail, we are the ones to always get stopped by the police, or always get tormented by the police. Um so that's like one thing that *one of my fears* that I told my mom and like *I'm scared for my little brother*. Yeah, he's eleven, but what if he gets in trouble and they arrest him? Like the whole situation with the Ahmed boy … my little brother because he's like really into STEM and I'm just like what if that happened to my little brother? Like I know my parents would get pretty mad. And my dad's like -- his thing is like, *I would get scared* too 'cos if that ever did happen … my dad has PTSD so he knows he's like- I feel like if that if happened my PTSD would go with him. So it's just like I- *I worry about the future* because of my little brother since he's a male.

As Valeria describes, she is very much afraid of what could happen with her father and brother. Citing an event in Texas where a young Muslim student was mistreated by his teachers and community because he brought a home-made clock to class, she suggests that something similar could potentially happen to her little brother. This is not unfounded since, as she previously had mentioned, her father has already had been racially profiled by police.

For others, the white racial framing of their group caused them to become angry and frustrated. For example, Agustin was on campus when he heard news of Donald Trump's 2015 speech where he referred to Mexicans as "criminals" and "rapists." He described his reaction when white peers were praising his words,

> I mean, I just heard them, man, and, and, and, like, it *hurt me inside* and *it pisses me off* that I didn't knew what to do, you know? A man, a white male with, with that power, like, I'm not sure what can we do as a community or what I can do as an individual to, to fight against that … he shouldn't be saying stuff like that, like, you know, he's being, you know, racist. But it, it hurts and it, and it, it pisses me off because he doesn't know, like, how much struggle we have to go through to be here in the United States or how much people struggle every day, you know, to provide food for their families, you know, to find a job…

Agustin is upset by the gross misconduct of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump and the support he received from many of Agustin's white peers at U of S. Similarly, Uriel reacted to the controversy surrounding ESPN sports broadcasting network's decision to broadcast a baseball game in Spanish. The following discussion demonstrates how he was disappointed that a professor had a conservative worldview when it came to Spanish:

> Uriel: Thinking about Spanish the thing that comes to mind is the World Classic in Baseball. When the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico had a game and they put it on ESPN and they broadcasted it in Spanish. And there was a lot of people, there was a lot of uproar. Like within the white community about it. Because, there were a lot of responses like people where like, "Why is ESPN putting this baseball game in Mexican?" What? Its not Mexican you know, it's Spanish! I feel like just because the media, the media makes Mexicans and immigration a huge deal, like Mexicans are coming to take our jobs, "oh, they take our jobs!" Mexicans they don't speak Spanish, they speak Mexican. They speak Mexican. So they basically, um, generalize and group all these groups together and make them Mexican. So maybe one way, Spanish is associated with Mexicans. It's not working then, people are just closed minded and we need to fix that.
>
> DO: How's that make you feel?

> Uriel: Honestly, I thought it was funny but at the same time, it isn't… *depressing* but it's just like, wow. Really? Like really? I'm pretty sure you're educated. One of them was a damn teacher! A professor who wrote that, who wrote [about speaking] Mexican. When you have Latinos in class, you hear them speaking Spanish, and "oh they're speaking Mexican," I know you're not gonna say that. Are you really that stupid or are you just ignorant, trying to be ignorant? Just to get attention? *It just makes me, not sad, but surprised*. We're in 2013, c'mon now.

Drawing on sub-frames of the white racial frame, the professor in Uriel's story mislabels the Spanish language and associates it only with Mexicans, again relying on the stigma associated with the homogenization of all Latinos as "Mexican." In this way, he also highlights the use of English-Only nativist ideologies to racialize language. While Uriel says that it is not depressing and not sad for him, he really meant that it was severely disappointing to him. In reality, Uriel did convey a sense of concern about the fact that this broadcast caused such a racialist reaction among predominantly white viewers.

Respondents also reported having taken extreme measures in anticipation of discrimination. This pointed directly to the white racial framing of their group that Latina/o students were acutely aware of. Juanita, a second-year Pre-Law student at U of S, described an incident that she had been a part of with her sorority sisters.

> Juanita: We actually had uhm, kind of an incident today where we were trying to, we volunteered at this Run, uhm, that was in some sort of Military Camp. So, to get in you have to, like, show your ID and, you know, they like make you like roll down the windows and they look in the car and stuff and then we were like, "oh no, we have to go through this like little like checkpoint and like put Juanita in the front, put Juanita in the front," because, um, I'm the one who looks the most white (laughs).
>
> DO: They really put you in the front seat?
>
> Juanita: Yeah, they did, like, we switched. We like turned around, switched seats, and then went back.

> DO: Where do you think that comes from? Like why would you do that?
>
> Juanita: Uhm, well the sisters I was in the car with, um, one, both of them grew up, like, closer towards the border, um, and one of them, like, says that to get home she has to go through, like, multiple checkpoints. Yeah, so she was like, "I know how this goes." Uhm, so I guess like that stems from that experience of hers. I know they joked, like I said they joked about it but it happened. I was put in the front seat to be like "hi, hello officer" (laughs). Uhm, but I mean, it was okay.
>
> DO: What was your reaction to that?
>
> Juanita: I don't -- I don't know. I -- because *we laughed it off*, but it's like (pauses) *it kind of concerns* me that that's something that we actually went through with, you know like, putting me in the front seat. Uhm, because that, like, it does mean that like something happened, I don't know. Otherwise, why would they do it? Uhm, because there is a line between, like, joking and actually doing it. So, I don't know, like it *concerns* me they wanted me to get up there so I did, um. So that was, like we joke about it, but we… it's something that happens just because they, like, I guess *they're scared*. They are like not like not to a like high degree, but to a certain point they are. They were hesitant, you know?

Juanita's story describes how she and her sorority sisters upon encountering military police were scared enough of the potential outcome of their interaction that they placed her in the front seat because she had the lightest skin tone and could pass for white. Juanita was surprised that the group went through with switching seats but the event spoke to the very real effects of the white racial framing of Latinas/os. Respondents realized that they would be viewed through a white racial frame by officials and attempted to circumvent this. Juanita was disconcerted by this interaction and was still surprised that some of her sorority sisters were so scared that they would go through these extreme measures to avoid harassment from authorities. Respondents overall experienced significant white racial framing which reinforced their racialization. This is

observed especially through how respondents reacted emotionally to many of the racist events that occurred both on and off campus.

**Experiencing Racial Alienation from White Friends: Racialized Culture and Class Dynamics in College**

> "No, I can't really say I'm blending in here. If that would've been true, I would have had like, white friends. I mean, I know white people, but I don't call them my friends."
>
> - Angel, Third-year student, Gamma Fraternity member -

For the Latina/o college students in this study, racial alienation is observable through the racialized class and cultural cleavages that exist among college students' social networks. Respondents like the one quoted above were unable to relate to their white peers often times as a result of cultural and class-based differences. Ultimately, this resulted in racial segregation – Latino students reported having very few, if any, white friends in their college social circles. The concept of racial alienation (Feagin 2010; Fanon 1952) refers to the separation of the racialized self from the objects and, especially, the people around them (Hook 2007). Within this concept is the process of estrangement wherein the oppressed loses his own sense of self and humanness based on racialization (Hook 2007). This is a consistent theme among Latina/o college students leading them to feel like they do not belong at their university; they are estranged from their peers along racialized class and cultural lines.

***Class Status***

Respondents stressed class differences between themselves and their white peers as a primary reason for which they felt that they could not relate to one another. Many

interpreted differences in class status performances along racial lines conflating the class status and associated middle/upper class conspicuous consumption patterns of whites with their racial classification. Others pointed to the privileged statuses that come with being middle and upper class and white as well as the value systems that often times follow. For example, during the group lunch described below, Joe and Diego discussed why they cannot relate with their white university peers:

> Joe: Transitioning from High School to here, I - I still hang out with Latinos, actually. … But the problem is that I have noticed that we, well, I can't talk to a Caucasian person. *I can't relate to them*. I can't find anything that I can relate to at all. I don't know, there's just something there that I can't hang out with them. Or go to a party or anything. Because *they're lifestyle* is to drink, drink, drink. And I guess, us, we like to drink yeah, but we're not gonna get drunk purposely. We're gonna party, we're gonna have a good time. That's, I don't know, there's a binary there or something. …but that's who I hang out with here. And of course, the brothers are all majority Latinos. And I don't have a problem with that, so that's who I hang out with.
>
> DO: Why do you think you can't relate to white people?
>
> Joe: I guess, where I come from. I mean, I went to a Latino grammar school, there were predominately Latinos, and if there were whites, *they weren't necessarily the richest*, so I could relate to them 'cos *we came from the same background.* Same thing with high school, that's where we came from. And here, they're from the suburbs. *They have money.* Mommy and daddy usually pay for everything. My parents do too, but they limit me to how much money I can get, or whatever I need. As opposed to, like I guess, a white person that is from the suburbs, and they're parents have money I guess, it's really not that hard for them to get what they want.
>
> Diego: Like what Joe said is kinda true, I was thinking about this earlier. You're a product of your environment. So like, he grew up there, and I grew up in a mostly black neighborhood. So I feel the same way, *I can't relate to white people 'cos they don't know, especially white suburban people, that grew up in your ideal white neighborhood, you have everything there, everything is catered to you*. But when you grow up in South Chicago, if you have ever been there, you really see the struggle that is there in that community. Where people depend on welfare, you have homeless people on the street, you know, they go steal into houses, there's more vacant houses than people actually live in them in that

> community. So, you can't really relate to them in that aspect because you live in this environment where you are struggling just to survive, when they are used to having everything catered to them, whether it is their parents or whatever. Where like me, my parents, if I ask them for something, they'll give it to me, but before they give me anything, I have to work for it first. I have to work for it first. … Nothing is free. And I feel like I've talked to a lot of white kids here, in classes I take with them, and I always ask them, "how did you get this, how did you get that?" [They reply,] "Oh, my parents bought it for me, I just asked them for it and they got it for me." And I'm like, "oh, that's nice," you know…

Joe and Diego both agree that it is challenging to relate to someone who has grown up with significant advantages associated with middle-class suburban lifestyles. Importantly, they also note that along with the different advantages a majority of white students have had, they would be unable to understand what life was like growing up in the inner city. This differentiation in upbringing creates, in their view, a different work ethic and cultural outlook that affect their academic lives in college; for Joe and Diego, "nothing is free." In both instances, respondents conflate race and class, suggesting that whites are mostly middle class and that the Latinas/os that Joe and Diego associate with are working class, which leads to an inability to relate to one another.

Respondents consistently discussed how they observed differences in their own economic and educational lifestyles or behaviors and those of their white peers. Echoing many of the same reservations about relating with white peers as Joe and Diego above, respondents pointed to the cost associated with living a lifestyle similar to many of their white peers. Uriel, mentioned earlier, explained that based on his observations, the rift that exists between his family's economic status and whites that join many of the predominantly white fraternities is significant, noting that he would not be able to afford

the costs of cancelling their lease with the university dormitory if he chose to live in a fraternity house. He explained,

> I would say, from my personal view, from what I've seen come out of them from that one time I been there, they may not all be like that, but when I visited them I felt this sense of racism, and at the end of the day you want to be with people that you relate to. *How am I gonna relate to a kid from suburbia?* Who has a nice house. I live in a god damn apartment, you know, all these people that I know, especially white people, and I try not to generalize but I know for a fact if you're in a white mainstream fraternity, you pay thousands of dollars to live in that house. Like, they leave freshman year to go live in a fraternity house, they have to cancel their dorm. Their cancellation fee is like $2,500! Their parents pay for that, their parents have the money to pay for that. And then they pay the fees, and the chapter dues, the dues, in order to live in that damn house. *So, it's like, I wouldn't have anything in common with them.* I wouldn't. I really feel like I wouldn't. Instead, I have so much more in common with brothers and my Latino fraternity. With my brothers.

Uriel drives home the point that he would not have anything in common with the members of predominantly white fraternities, based on the significant gap in means between his family's and theirs. He points out that, in addition to racism he has personally faced from predominantly white fraternities, in addition to the class status differences he has noticed, he would not have anything in common with them. The economic lifestyles that middle and upper class students have becomes evident in their observed behavior and can become a turn off for Latina/o students in interacting with their white peers. For example, Yolanda explains how she was rubbed the wrong way in her first interactions with white students at Southern Tech. She stated:

> When I came to college I realized, really like, I kind of like "whoa, there's a hella different population out here," and for someone who, someone who, like me who felt very confident and very prepared for college, I was lost and confused. And I went to fish camp and there was *very few Hispanics or other people there*, I just kept, I don't know, I just had this mentality that *all these white people are crazy* (laughs). Because they were, I don't know, they were complaining about small things, like it being too hot or they had to share a bathroom, or they had to eat in

> the cafeteria. Like, it's orientation camp, you're away *camping* essentially. You're not going to have, you know, the Holiday Inn Express or whatever.

Yolanda immediately noticed the differences in her expectations versus her white peers. This was most likely emphasized to her given the significant lack of students of color that existed at her university orientation camp. Importantly, she highlights how white students, probably due to their class status, were unaccustomed to roughing it for a day in the camp.

Angel had a similar experience at his orientation concerning how he felt alienated from his white peers. After echoing many of the same concerns around a lack of diversity as many other respondents, he noted how different the educational experiences of his white peers was from his,

> …But almost every kid that I met there they would always talk about *how their parents would run companies or make this much money or how their schools had iMacs.* We didn't have Macs. We didn't get Macs until I was gonna graduate and even then they sucked. They were slow. They were old, used already. It was just crazy seeing that many white people, hearing how they lived. Uhm. The amount of money their school put in. We … our school… our teams wore the same jerseys all the time. We never had new jerseys. Everything was messed up. It was just crazy hearing them talk about what they have in their school. How much money their parents make. I … I felt left out. *I couldn't relate to that.* I heard all of that and I was like, man, I can't relate to you. I don't want to be your friend. I kind of stayed to myself. Even though they kept on tryin' to be friendly with me, I'm a pretty reserved person. But yeah I mean I felt secluded just by hearing all that talk.

I asked Angel how he came to learn about all of this, and he replied:

> We were sitting down and eating lunch, right? I don't know why we started talking about football, and they were like saying how their team was travelling all around the country and they asked about mine and I was like, we suck. Our football team sucks. Uhm. And yeah, like, … it just came up. It came up when we were talking about football and one of them just brought up like, "yeah, I think my dad is gonna donate like a hundred thousand," or something like that.

> Like his dad was gonna donate a lot of money, alright, I don't wanna say a hundred thousand, it might have been less than that but it was a lot of money. Uhm and I was. I remember my first impression, it just came out of no where, I was like, "Damn! That much money? We never got that even fundraising!"

Much like Angel, respondents discussed how the significant differences in upbringing was for their interactions. It became quickly apparent for Angel that the different backgrounds in students lives before college would influence who he would be comfortable with. In the cases of some women, the gendered class consumption patterns were also deal breakers for friendships. For example, in the following quote, Guadalupe described how she noticed how the economic consumption behaviors reflected the held values of her white peers and how they were incompatible. She describes her interaction in the Military Club that she has since stopped participating in:

> Guadalupe: I stopped hanging around with the girls because they're too, um, not (sighs) they, like, the things that I find funny or, like, that I'm into, like, because I have like a really weird sense of humor and, um, or, and sometimes it's kind of crude, um, sense of humor and they don't kind of understand that. Like, they come from families that are very, very protective of them, like, they, they don't (laughs), they don't get some jokes or something or they're very judgmental of everyone, um, you know, they're always, like, the type of girls that have, like, Michael Kors or, you know, the tops brands and stuff and, like, I never came from that. I'm just laid back. Like, I don't care what I'm wearing. Uhm, I, I didn't come from money and they did. And so, like, the people that I hung out with, they, they were more easy going, they, they came from similar backgrounds.
>
> D: Uh-huh.
>
> Guadalupe: That's why I felt those were my friends because I didn't always have to, like, keep up with them, you know?

For Guadalupe, the fact that her white friends grew up very "protected," resulted in her not being able to relate with her crude sense of humor. She adds that had she remained

friends with the girls in her military club, she would have felt the need to "keep up" with them, suggesting that she would need to change how she performed her class status.

For Ana, the problem with having white friends was not that they had different (middle and upper class) consumption behaviors, but rather that those consumption patterns prevented them from knowing more about her group history, as well as her class background. When I asked her why she did not make friends with her white classmates, she responded that it was the same reason that white students continue to commit racist aggressions,

> 'Cos if you grow up rich and you never know what it means to have a problem, you usually never know what it means to have a problem, then you'll never know what it means to struggle to put clothes on your back or a roof on your family's head. These are people that just got used to a nice lifestyle and you know, perhaps, they got to enjoy some aspects of the culture, but like going to *Cabo San Lucas* you know. Or the *Yucatan,* or whatever that place is called you know, all those nice touristy spots in Mexico … But they never understand the history, the dark history behind our cultures, algo asi. And really it's just privilege, to be honest. They don't have to worry.

Ana believes that growing up rich means never having to worry, and for elite and middle class white students, it also means to not "have to worry" about learning about her history. Importantly, privilege and class status performance in the way of consumption behaviors was prevalent for women. They pointed to the class status of their peers and how this was displayed in their clothes and the name brands of their things. Dolores compares how she had some white friends in her home town but that the white students in her university are different because of this reason. She stated:

> I found it really difficult to try and associate with, like, white people, you know, because back home, like, it was easy. You know, like, everyone kind of hung out with each other. It was kind of like the same and then I get here and it's like no

> these people are not, they don't want to talk to me. They don't want to be my friends because I'm not like them.

She notes how she made efforts to befriend whites, but that they had been unsuccessful attempts. Interactions were often times hurtful, especially with three girls she had spent time with in her dormitory, including her first roommate. She explained:

> I invited them and I was like hey, like, I'm having my birthday dinner, I'd really like for ya'll to come out, um, and just share my day with, with me, or something. Uhm, and they're like "yeah, sure, we'll go" and then they didn't show up. Nothing. And I haven't spoken to them since.

Respondents were keenly aware of the important role that class status and its associated performances played in the sorting process of college social circles. For example, when I asked Dolores why she believed that white college students were different from her friends from high school, she explained,

> I want to say that it has also a lot to do with, like, um, economic-social status. You know, because a lot of the, like I said back home it was lower class and so they kind of grew up on the same level as I did. So money was never there – it was just never a really big influence. But here, it's like if you don't have something, like, of a certain brand or if you don't wear certain things, then you probably can't hang out with them. You know, because just because they're more, like, their parents have more money than yours. Uhm, and they're not going to want to hang around with *someone who can't keep up*, basically. Uhm, so they might not be mean girls, they might not, not all of them, but the majority of them are. So, I want to attribute it to the fact that they just grew up differently than I did, not, not only in, like, a different, like, environment. But also, like, in the, in their way of living. They just, they've always had more so they've always felt superior in a way. Um, so it was, it's kind of hard for me to, like, because I am a proud person, so I don't believe in, like, lowering yourself to make someone else feel better. Um, I think that they want to talk to you or you want to be friends, you should see yourself on the same level *regardless of what you* have because it's, like, the person, you want to person to be your friend, not what they have, right? Um, so I just didn't want to, I'm just like no, like, I'm not going to give up any more than I already have -- to be friends with someone who doesn't really want, like, genuinely to be my friend.

Repeating some of Guadalupe's earlier concerns about "keeping up" with her middle and upper class white friends, Dolores on principle rejects the idea that a person's economic status should dictate how they are treated or whether they are viewed as equals. She believes that her white friends in high school were on the same economic level as her and this is reflected in how she felt she was treated by them. In contrast, she believes that her white friends in college made her class status more salient in how she was treated by them.

While Dolores' experience was direct, racial alienation along class lines often takes a more indirect approach. Whereas Sebastian felt that the demographic composition of the college was a shock, he also felt that the culture shock he experienced also reflected his inability to relate to his white peers. This too involved different class statuses. For example, he retold an anecdote of a conversation he overheard on the campus shuttle:

> A lot more [whites] than I expected and, like I don't, I don't feel I can, I can talk to them as much. I still remember that one conversation, there was, like, some girl was in the back of me, um, there was, like, they were saying, like, "oh, my dad just got me a Jeep but it's not the color I wanted." I was just like (pauses) (laughs). I turned around (turns torso to give look of disbelief) (laughs). I was just like, girl, like I wish I had those problems (laughs). So like I don't, I don't feel like I can really connect to them.

In this brief conversation that Sebastian heard on a bus, he observed how many middle-class students perform class status and importantly, talk about the lifestyle they seem to live. This is distinct from Sebastian's class status. He also linked middle and upper class lifestyle to a difference in values and moral disposition, though he acknowledged that it's not a widespread phenomenon.

> Sebastian: I'm not saying, like, everybody. Like there's always, like, that one individual, but they don't have the same hardships as minorities do, so I know that, like, I can't really relate to them because they, they don't really, we don't have anything in common. For example, that article that I read, el vato, like, there's one word that they used, I didn't know was do I Googled it and it's like oh, uhm, an illness that, uhm, rich people suffer from -- Affluenza? I didn't know there was affluenza. Like there's, like, an actual word for it. I was just like this is, it was too much!
>
> DO: And you think some students at this university suffer from affluenza?
>
> Sebastian: Yup.

Alluding to the incident where a teenager, Ethan Couch, who in 2013 killed four people in a drunk-driving collision, Sebastian views many of his classmates as suffering from affluenza, thus precluding any real connection happening between them and him. And, as I discuss in Chapter 4, the hardships and sacrifices that these respondents and their families have endured are a central part of their student identities. Ultimately, observable racialized class differences caused a major blockage in making white friendships for Latina/o respondents.

***Cultural Difference***

While observed class status performances were a key factor in keeping Latina/o students from connecting with a majority of their white peers, they also occurred concurrent with other forms racial alienation, including importantly along cultural lines. Cultural differences included, the important role that white peers placed on religious affiliation and the fact that white peers did not understand Latina/o music and language, which for many respondents was a major part of their lives. These were another major obstacle preventing Latinas/os from making white friends.

For example, Ana described how religious orientation played a role in creating unavoidable differences that prevented respondents from developing relationships. She explained,

> I belonged to this church group and sometimes I was the only Hispanic person there. And it was kinda awkward because I love when I can relate to someone, you know, at some level. And these were all rich kids that come from super religious families. And then there was me. And uh, I couldn't relate to them spiritually because I'm not super religious, I couldn't relate to them like, you know, home life because my home life was a lot different than theirs, I couldn't relate to them cultural, 'cos we're not from the same culture. And uh, sometimes, it was fun though, "how do you say this word in Spanish?" "oh, you say it like this," and whatever. But definitely I feel more comfortable when I'm in a group of people that grew up like me, have a home life like mine, or are culturally like me. And it's really helpful when you have a combination of all three. 'Cos, I wasn't rich, my family, we're Christian, but we're not super-religious. And so yeah, I understand were some students are coming from, you know, especially students that grew up only in Hispanic communities, like they never saw anyone else other than Hispanics, like an Asian student, a black student, a white student, you know. I've been told that too like, I only grew up around people that spoke Spanish or Spanglish, and coming to a new school it was like culture shock.

The fact that she was not as dedicated to her religion as her counterparts in the group, in addition to the fact that she could not relate to their experiences of being brought up in a middle or upper class household, as well as her racial identification caused her to remain an outsider in the group.

For many respondents, cultural inclusion was a nonstarter for their social relationships. For example, when I asked Uriel if culture was important for his friendships and brothers, he replied:

> When it comes to Latino culture, yes, we listen to like, our culture, mariachis. We speak Spanish. We listen to like corridos, sometimes we drink Coronas, Modelos, that's something that like you wouldn't, well, *that's something that we do at home*. We go eat at Mexican restaurants, we'll watch movies in Spanish. I don't know how to explain it. It's just, sometimes it's like we're so unique. All of us are so unique that our relationship within ourselves [among our friends] is just

> like, we can, it's more apparent to me now, that you see, I couldn't act like that if I was in a white people organization. They wouldn't know what the hell a corrido was. [Pretending to tell a white fraternity member:] "Hey bro, let's go get some tacos." [Mimicking white fraternity member reply:] "Tacos?! Let's go get some burgers." Something like that. I couldn't imagine myself being anywhere else but within my organization with these guys.

Based on his experiences, Uriel's cultural disposition and upbringing were very important for his social relationships. "Being comfortable" in his social relationships included the ability to participate in his culture whenever he wanted, without this he couldn't be himself.

The ability to participate in their culture was central to selecting their social relationships. For example, in an ice breaker at a fraternity-sorority mixer, Dolores introduced herself as "very Mexican." When I later asked her what she meant by this, we had the following conversation:

> Dolores: It's very rare to find someone else who listens to the same kind of music that I listen to or who, like, enjoys the same kind of things as in, like, food wise or, like, um, going out, like, I guess the having fun part, like, I like going out, um, Mexican dancing, like. Dancing that kind of music...
>
> DO: For example, like to bailes?
>
> Dolores: Yeah, bailes and coliaderas and all of that, all of that good stuff. Uhm, I have yet to meet … like, I have to introduce the topic of coliaderas to people (laughs). Well, um, it's basically like a Mexican sport where they, like, dress up as charros … so I really enjoy going to that, um, my dad's really big on it. I think it was, it's really big in Zacatecas. I don't know, I guess I just feel like I embrace that part of myself a little more than other people. So, I kind of, like, put it out there so, like, in case other people are the same way, you know, like, "Hey come on, let's, like, hang out and do all these things together." Because coming here, like, I'm not as close to that part, that side of me, you know, because my family is back home. All of that, all that that I know is back home. I don't have any of that here. So I try and find people to, like, help me keep it alive here…

Dolores found that she often needed to introduce some of the elements of her culture to friends, even Latino friends. Because her family and people she would normally embed herself in her culture through are back home, she suggests that she needs to surround herself with friends who can help her do that.

The centrality of culture for Latina/o students is something that has been discussed in much higher education research that suggests that Latina/o students undergo *cultural starvation.* In this way, institutions of higher education lack cultural resources for students of color, causing them hardship in their transition to college. Just as Dolores above states that she misses her home culture, Nelson felt that he needed to surround himself with people who shared his values and upbringing. While he notes that he has not faced blunt direct discrimination, he was unable to get along with white friends on the basis of culture. He explained,

> Uhm, no one treated me any different. It wasn't like people yelling stuff at me or nothing like that, but uh I notice there were groups, certain people hanging out together and other people would hangout and I always felt out of the loop. You know they were talk about their-- you know, because I'm a Catholic, they would talk about their Christian stuff and their Lutheran stuff for like this group and that group. Like, where do I fit in in this kind of stuff? Uhm the conservative club, the Eagle Republicans, that's like, I don't -- that's not my scene. I feel like I didn't have anybody to actually connect with which is another reason why I felt joining this organization, my fraternity was important 'cos it gave me somewhere to go to when I didn't have anything else to do, you know? You know what I mean -- to be a part of something that has the *same values and stuff I had growing up*… and uh, *I feel like we don't have enough here for us*. So- but I did notice that. That was probably one of the first things I noticed. It was just like, "okay."

Nelson felt that there are not enough opportunities in college for him to surround himself with his culture. At the same time, he praised predominantly white fraternities for having

the resources that they do. In his view, the main reason he did not join was because he could not identify with the members. He explained,

> Yeah, definitely – there's lots of good things about white frats. I mean the reason I didn't is because there isn't too many people like me in them. You know, it's not because they don't accept them, it's just traditionally that's what it is. Um but yeah, just because I didn't identify myself with them doesn't mean that they are a negative group at all. It just wasn't what I was looking for … I couldn't identify myself with any other groups until I met, you know, [the Phi Fraternity brothers]. *Just being able to express myself and speak the same language as them* … I identified with that real quick, it clicked.

When Nelson found his fraternity brothers, he had what he could not have with his white friends: shared culture. He was not excluded based on his religion or culture, he found a group with a shared language and a group with whom he could identify.

Observed class status performances and cultural familiarity are permeated by racial dynamics. Importantly, these processes worked in conjunction with existing racial lines to reinforce difference (and inequality). This was further demonstrated when respondents spoke simply in racial terms, signifying that independent of the closely related cultural and class-based processes, respondents interpreted their difference and estrangement from their white peers in *racial* terms.

Brandi discussed how uncomfortable the lack of diversity and overwhelming predominance of whites on campus made her. As the following excerpt demonstrates, this discomfort was primarily because she believed she was unable to relate to whites.

> Brandi: I definitely think that it was majority, like, white or Caucasian, but then once, like, I started school, like, I noticed that there were, like, a lot of other races or ethnicities, but it was, it was, and I still feel like it's predominately white. Uhm, especially like in my classes, like, there's only, like, a few, few other people that are Latinos or Hispanics. But when I got here, like, or when I even, when I visit here, it was predominantly white.

DO: How did it make you feel?

Brandi: I mean it kind of made me feel, like, a little bit uncomfortable because I, I didn't, I mean, I have not, in high school I didn't have the experience of the relationship with, with another race such as a person that's white, you know? I never talked to no one who was white, I never had, like, a friend who was from that racial background, so I didn't knew how to relate to them and until right now I don't, like, I don't have a, a white friend. So, I don't know how, how they, I don't know how to relate to them in a way, you know, so that kind of made me feel uncomfortable or even it makes me still feel uncomfortable to go and reach out to them or try and make a conversation just because I, *I just don't know, like, how to relate to them.*

Just as many other respondents suggested that they could not relate to their white peers because of class differences or due to whites inability to appreciate Latina/o culture, Brandi simply did not feel a connection with white students. Conversely, it was common for respondents to have white friends early on in college only to become estranged from them as time progressed, in large part because of cultural, classed, and ultimately racial divisions. For example, in an interview with Vicente, he outlined the friendships he used to have, including white friends his first and first part of his second year. He commented about them,

Vicente: I see them to this day, and it's just like we have fun, like, we just enjoy each other's company, and what's it called, yeah, 'cos I remember just going off to their dormitories, playing what's it called, Super Mario Smash Brothers, and just enjoying each other's company

DO: Are you still friends with those friends?

Vicente: I don't hang out with them as much as I used to. But what's it called, if I see them around, it's always great and we talk for a little while. Um, I did a lot of stuff to try, before joining the fraternity, I did a lot of stuff to try to fit in, like I mentioned, and so, I had hung out with them for a good while, *but then I felt like I was missing something else.*

Vicente explains that was likely missing more authentic relationships based on cultural and class-based relatability. He later joined his fraternity which enabled him to gain that "something else" he had been missing.

Other respondents were more direct about what made their connection to white friends, or in Juanita's case, predominantly white sorority members a challenge. Basically, she explains below, it was because they were white and she was not.

> Juanita: I wanted a sorority, like, full of girls that I felt like I would *connect, like, closer with and have close friends*, like bonds and close friends with. Um, and I didn't get that with them so I figured, um, I saw all of them joining these other orgs and I and I was like oh, I don't know, not like, I don't know. I just figured if they were in it, it reflected a little bit on the type of girls that were in it, and not to stereotype, but um. Like, I don't know, I feel like I'm phrasing it wrong, or like offensively, but um, yeah I felt like I didn't get along with them so *I felt like I wouldn't fit in with the rest.*
>
> DO: Okay, did it ever, was it in part because they were, like, white or was it something else?
>
> Juanita: Um, (pauses) a little bit. *They were very, like I said, the like, um, like they all had like the blond hair or red hair*. Uhm, a lot of them had freckles and like blue eyes and, you know, the stereotypical, and like I wasn't that. And like, *I would look at the pictures of the sororities on, like, on their websites, that's all I would see and I would, like, you would see like hmm one brunette, but even she had like pretty blue eyes* and stuff like that and um. I was like, oh, *none of them look like me,* even though like I, I'm rather pale, um. I was like no, I don't know, so.

The visibly racially homogenous context of predominantly white sororities prevented Juanita from joining one. The fact that Juanita observed how members in both real life and in the publications of predominantly white sororities appeared to be white, would have prevented her from creating genuine relationships with members.

A common theme that arose was the perceived closeness of respondents' friendships. Many attributed their inability to connect with their peers to racial

difference. For example, Agustin noticed how his interactions with white peers were superficial and not fruitful. He commented,

> I feel like, especially like in, in, in my freshman year when I was in Calhoun, uhm, the dormitory, like, a lot of people tried to talk to me, especially, whites tried to talk to me and I, I talked back to them, but, like, there was, like, there was this point where, like, it was like "hey, what major are you from," and everything, but then from there I didn't knew what else to ask, you know? Like, I didn't knew what to do after that, after you finish just saying, like, facts about you, you know? So, I never went into, like, a deep conversation with anyone.

In this way, even though whites made efforts to talk with Agustin, especially in his dormitory, he was unsure how to develop the friendship beyond a superficial and surface level acquaintanceship.

Ultimately, respondents interpreted their limited friendships with whites as the result of their unwillingness to interact with Latino organizations and an absence of interest with Latino-oriented organizational activities. Importantly, Sebastian views the lack of friendships along racial lines as a lack of organizational support. When I asked him, "do you believe you the Eagle Family motto includes you?" Sebastian explained,

> No. We, you would see a lot more, like, an event, any event either from us, my fraternity, or MSJ [a social justice-oriented student organization], I only see like one or two white students and one of them is a boyfriend of a girl that's an exec for, for, um, MSJ, so he's always there por que she's there. So, like, why, why wouldn't they come and support us, you know?

For Sebastian, the fact that most white students take no interest in his organizations' events and activities means that they do not view him as a part of the "Eagle family." Specifically, his organization focuses on issues surrounding undocumented students and social inequalities. In this way, friendships with white students are unlikely to occur for Sebastian because, in his view, white students do not share the same political worldview.

Respondents that described feeling alienated from their white peers along strictly racial lines often times used race as a proxy to point to other social dynamics. When I asked respondents if they'd ever felt like they had been treated differently on their college campus, Juanita described how she felt she had been treated differently:

> Juanita: Uhm, yes. Uhm, (pause) but it was mainly like I….I would walk into a room and I would just like took different, you know what I'm saying? Uhm, and it like-it's, I don't feel, I don't know how to phrase it, I'm sorry. But, um, like it's sad that I have to say like that was the most apparent, like, but it like, that was a factor, that *I would look different, but that was the most apparent*, like when I walked into the room it was just clear because you know, everyone's all like, white, and they have like pretty blond hair. And like I'm not saying that my hair isn't, I like my hair color, but uhm, like I was different in that aspect, in um, like I just didn't fit in aesthetically and uhm just like culturally I guess.

In her view, the main observable difference between Juanita and her white peers was her appearance. She has trouble pinpointing what it was at first, and even though she describes herself as light-skinned she also notes that she was noticed and marked as different upon walking into rooms. After her response, the following exchange took place:

> DO: Was this like an event or something that you're thinking of or?
>
> Juanita: Uhm, not an event, so much as like, I would -- I live in a dorm that has a lot of, uhm, sorority girls from the predominately white sororities and like even just interacting with them, as far as eating in the cafeteria or just everyday casual encounters it's just like… Kind of like that difference, culturally. Not that we don't get along but it's weird. I don't know how to describe it. Lil' bit like incompatibility maybe? Um, let me think about *everything* (laughs).

Juanita emphasized how race was an important factor, and while she mentions culture, she also suggests that it is hard to put into words what it was that made her feel like she was being treated differently. Ultimately, she concludes that her alienation was

comprehensive in that she couldn't think of just one event or interaction that causes her to think this way. She finds that this alienation indeed is induced by "everything."

If white overrepresentation at the university, experiencing racialization, and racial alienation were not enough to experience a sense of marginalization in college, then experiencing intense forms of racist aggressions and racial exclusion served to further Latina/o college students' racial nonbelonging at their university.

**Racism in College: Nothing "Micro" About Racist Aggressions**

As opposed to "racial microaggressions," which much of the literature describes as underhanded comments or "microinsults" that demean a person's racial heritage or identity, racist aggressions refer to the cumulative discriminatory behaviors and practices among white students, administrators, faculty that result in negative outcomes for people of color. Racist aggressions include both direct forms of racism wherein students in this study were the target of racial epithets and indirect interactions where white racial framing of Latinas/os is very clearly implied in an event or interaction. Racial microaggressions are also believed to contribute to a "negative campus climate" for students of color, whereas racist aggressions connect the behaviors and practices of agents of the university to the resulting racially segregated and inequitable institutional processes in higher education.

Racial microaggressions are called such because they draw on widespread stereotypes to insult their victims but do so indirectly and on the individual, interpersonal level. It is important to note that this term allows actors to be free from responsibility for their actions and minimizes the effects. While in utilizing the term

*racist aggressions* I do not seek to deem actors as "racist" in the conventional use of the term, I do wish to emphasize that racist aggressions achieve the same effect – perpetuating the effects of systemic racism – by veiling the actors' intentions. The effects of racism have the same outcomes despite intentionality. Racist aggression then, is a more accurate terminology to clearly address the negative experiences that tie in both macro, mezzo, and micro levels of social interaction and oppression.

***Facing Direct Racist Aggressions***

The dialogue that follows below is taken from an observation period during a group dinner. The group consisted of members of the Phi Fraternity, a visiting member from a chapter in Florida, and potential future members. We went to a chicken wing / sports bar type of restaurant near the campus of Southern Tech University. Into the conversation over food, the discussion steered toward the general experiences of getting to know each other's campuses.

> Gilbert: Yeah, like, going to Calhoun State College was the first time I met so many white people.
>
> Hans: Yeah, I was the same way. It's culture shock.
>
> DO: Is Greek life big at Calhoun State College?
>
> (Gilbert and John nodded)
>
> Hans: Greek life is big at Florida. But let's face it. White people are f*ckin' racist. They are not the nicest either. And fraternities are not an exception.

For some time, scholars have noted that racism has transformed from overt into symbolic, colorblind, and/or backstage racism, and has simply become veiled behind a widespread social etiquette that has stigmatized overt racism (Picca and Feagin 2007;

Mueller, Dirks, Picca 2007; Baumle and Fossett 2005). Consistent with this observation, I find that few respondents reported having experienced little direct overt discrimination. However, many still reported a *knowledge* of racist hostilities, reaffirming to them the fact that racism remains prevalent, as demonstrated in the previous interaction I observed during a group dinner. As a result, while many respondents reported having experienced forms of "classic" or direct racial discrimination in college, more still described having had friends that have experienced racism first-hand. For an example of traditional racism, that is, a direct racist aggression, we can consider Tanya's recent experience at Southern Tech. Tanya described an interaction with a white male student she rode the bus with one time after orientation:

> Tanya: I remember being on the bus and um, and I was talking to one of the kids and he was like "I would never date you because I don't date brown people," I was like, "okayyy…." (laughs) and I'm like, "what? What did I do to you?"
>
> DO: That seems like a random comment, came out of nowhere?
>
> Tanya: Yeah, it was a random comment, I'm just like, I don't understand… what do you get out of saying that? I was trying anything.

In this brief encounter, Tanya experienced direct discrimination. The white male student effectively discriminated against her by telling her that she would not be included in his prospective dating pool based on her race. In this way, respondents experienced direct discrimination. In other scenarios, respondents reported having witnessed situations that could have been directed toward them. Consider how Sebastian responded when I asked him if he had ever been treated differently based on his race:

> Uhm, treated differently. O pues, this semester I was walking to, in, uhm, by Market Street. I don't remember where we were going, but I was just walking and, like, um, some guys, like, rolled down their windows and said "go back to

> your country!" I'm just like, "I'm not even that dark, what the f*ck?" But, like last month I think. It was, like, I don't know, midnight going towards Market Street and I was listening to my music pero it was changing a song so it got quiet for a second. I was hearing everybody around me and these two, um…probably, like, alternative, alternative rock. I don't know, but it was, it was changing songs and these two dudes, like, in back of me they were like "oh, man. I love being racist," and then is like "hey, like, that's weird?" and he's like "nah, I'm just kidding." I'm like, no. In my mind, I was like you may be saying you're just kidding, but I feel like they said that for a reason. Like that's kind of like their internal selves coming out, pero as a jokingly manner.

At best, Sebastian described a "backstage racist" (Picca and Feagin 2007) moment wherein the white passersby did not intend for him to hear their conversation. At worse, Sebastian describes a form of racist harassment wherein the white passersby wanted to taunt him about their openly racist views. In the first scenario however, in all likelihood, Sebastian encountered a racist aggression directed at him by a white passerby.

Like other respondents, Sebastian had also heard stories from friends of their being openly discriminated against. He retold a story he had heard from a Latina friend,

> This girl was saying how she was on the bus and then, uhm, the bus suddenly stopped and, like, she, like, almost fell. She kind of, like, went a little bit forward and she hit this white guy and the white guy just told them to, uhm, to "watch where you're going, wetback!" And, like, she started tearing up, kind of, like, remembering. I'm like, I've never heard that term before, but obviously, like, she did and I felt bad for her. Yeah. So, like, or Sadie, like, when she was here as an undergrad, like, they were calling her racial slurs, "nigger," uhm, "bitch," and but *she kind of got, like, used to it.* Not used to it, but she kind of, like, was indifferent about it because obviously, she's, she's still here.

Noting that it was something that people got used to, Sebastian notes how racism using racial epithets, including racialized versions of derogatory terms, was and remains a common experience. Tanya, from earlier, also noted that though she was surprised after having been told that she was an not datable as a "brown" person, she'd had friends that have experienced a form of drive-by racism,

> One of my friends was running down the street, just here down Aiken Boulevard, and … so he was telling me that someone yelled out of a car, he's Mexican, and someone yelled, "Go back to Mexico, wetback!"

Although not many respondents reported having experienced direct racism in the form of racial epithets or derogatory terms, several remained aware that these occasions did happen and that they were a "normal" part of the college experience at their university.

Consistent with this finding, the majority of respondents characterized their social and academic experiences in terms of having involved indirect racism or, even more poignantly, as I describe later, incidents where they felt they were being excluded from social or academic settings based on their race.

***Facing Indirect Racist Aggressions***

Latina/o students routinely experienced forms of indirect racist aggressions from white peers. A major event that preoccupied the minds of many of the respondents at U of S was a racially-themed party wherein members of predominantly white fraternities and sororities dressed as racial caricatures of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Ana described her reaction when she learned about the event,

> So last year, this group, let's call them the Xi's or whatever. They had a party that apparently was supposed to be "Western" themed. And people started taking pictures, and it wasn't really Western themed. There weren't many cowboys and cowgirls and haybells. It became actually pretty poignant that it was a "Mexican" -themed party. And people that were there took pictures of people dressed as immigration officials, dressed as plumbers, you know, they had like, uh, a big old thing that said like "tequila, 100 % agave," and stuff like that. And it is a big deal because this happened like three times before with other Greek organizations, were they had "Mexican" themed parties… It's not like I'm offended, like, "oh you called me this ugly name," it's very problematic that it's like, oh is this how you see me. Is this how you see me, as someone that is afraid of immigration? Do you see me as someone that loves tequila? Do you see me as someone who is like dressed in poncho every day? Like, No. Really?

Events like the one described above affected respondents on a personal level. As Ana comments, while it was not a direct attack on Ana individually, the mockery of her culture was offensive to her. When I asked Atina, Ana's line sister, if she had ever felt like she had been treated differently because of her race and gender, the most salient experience that came to mind was the racist party that Ana had described and had expressed disgust with. She commented:

> I don't know if you've heard about that Xi party on campus. It was like a fraternity, one of the bigger ones on campus, they threw a "Border" -themed party and people apparently attended. I just saw it online. Uhm, they attended wearing like construction gear with, like, nametags that said, like, "Juan" or something racist and they would wear sombreros. And that's your basic cultural appropriation and just full on racism and that was fought. A lot of people were angry and I know several people went to the protest to get them disbanded from campus but I don't think it happened. I know that was like a big thing on campus that had recently happened…

To be sure, racist parties were a common theme among the three campuses. Respondents generally grouped the events occurring within these predominantly white fraternities with other events that have taken place on campus. These events had the same effect of indirectly insulting Latinas/os. For instance, Ramiro connected the racist parties to broader conservative efforts on campus that offend him personally. He explained,

> There's been events that have been, or, events that have tried to be thrown here on campus. There's, um, there's a group, what are they called, the Young Conservatives, YC, and a couple years ago, maybe, like, two years ago, they were going to throw this event called a "Catch an Illegal Immigrant" event and they were going to have people, uhm, they were going to have a select number of people wear a t-shirt that said "illegal" and if you see them on campus, you're supposed to go and catch them, bring them back, and you would get, like, a prize. And so yeah. I felt, you know, while I am born here in the United States, I mean, I have, I have a lot of friends who weren't, you know what I mean, and who are undocumented and, and so it, it, it angers me as well when stuff like that happens. So, while it wasn't, I didn't feel discriminated directly, in an indirect way, I did feel like my whole people were discriminated against, and not just

> Latinos, but other race, other races, too, who are here undocumented, you know. I don't think that was right of them to try and host that event. The fact that they were going to do something like that, that's pretty messed up.

For Ramiro, the racist parties and the Young Conservative student group on campus were two sides of the same coin. The use of racist stereotypes such as in the racially-themed party and the Young Conservative-sponsored event were common among when respondents reported how they had faced indirect racism from peers on campus. In the case of parties, stereotypes used their cultural materials as a prop for the bud of an ongoing and demeaning racial joke. Consider the following response from Uriel, who shared a story with me when I asked him if he had ever experienced anything where he would say, "that was racist toward me?"

> Uriel: Yeah, I was at GladBar [a bar near campus]. With a lot of fraternity brothers. And some white guy comes in with a sombrero and it's just like, you hear a lot of these stories and people still don't learn. He might have thought that it was funny, he probably thought there wasn't gonna be any Mexicans, but… I found that offensive. Like, "Damn, what's this guy doing wearing a sombrero? He's not -- he's white." I'm not saying he wasn't Mexican, he could have been Latino in some way but, it's like, he wasn't of our … of our group or Latino, so…
>
> DO: You took offense to the fact that he was wearing a sombrero?
>
> Uriel: Yeah. Because, you know, it's in our culture, it's something that we identify ourselves with, you know? We have certain, uh, how do I say, certain ethnic capital-- it's something we identify with. Like, mariachis. Tacos. *It's us.* We have that all the time. Like sombreros, people where sombreros like to a soccer game, and they got maracas, *it's something I identify our culture with*. Mexican culture with. It's just like, It's like a symbol basically. You know? And the mariachi is a symbol. Yeah but I feel like, I identify with that. If you were to see that, you would think, Mexican.

In this account, which took place in a campus bar, a white student felt comfortable using a sombrero as a comical prop in his festivities. For the white student, the sombrero was a

temporary costume, whereas for Uriel, it was a symbol of his everyday lived culture. In fact, Uriel holds his culture so personally, that such an event would be taken as an insult and it would also be personal which is why he said "it's us."

Interactions that could be described as indirectly racist maintained an undercurrent of humiliation. For example, Blanca talked about how when she was a first-year and joining Military Club, a white senior member made racial jokes at her expense, an especially traumatizing event as she was one of a handful Latinas/os in her company. She explained,

> There was one time, I was, I was really mad about this. When everybody is together, the Freshies [newer members] are in the hallway, uhm, because it was before a football game, so we were all in the hallway, and you have, well, you have the sophomores being sophomores and they're yelling at you, but, uhm, they were off to the side because if you're, if the juniors are, like, trying to joke around with you, like, the seniors can't be around because they're supposed to be, like, serious all the time. Uhm, so the juniors and the seniors are the ones in the hallways with us. Uhm, then there is this thing that they call a "push button." And there's like about what, 30 juniors, seniors and so, like, each one just picks somebody to mess with. So, like, the Freshies are supposed to do something. In our company, they do something funny, to entertain the upperclassman. And, uhm, they were giving me my push button and I had to say, *Dora the Explorer*, quotes and I didn't because *I was mad. I was just like, I found that offensive*…

In effect, the white upperclassman wanted Blanca to utilize mock Spanish by mimicking a popular Latina cartoon character. Certainly, being one of the few Latina women in her company made this interaction even more salient for her. In this way, again, Latina/o culture was used as a comical prop. In Blanca's case, the interaction was humiliating and personally demeaning for her. In other instances, interactions became racialized based on the implicit assumptions behind the tones in the voices of white aggressors. For example,

when Luciana needed to clear up a financial aid situation, she sought help from the financial aid office:

> I remember I went to the financial aid office for my FAFSA [financial aid forms] I had put my dad's information down first but then it was summer and my dad had still not filed his taxes so I went in and I was like "hey, I want to change it to my mom's" and one of them was like "whoa, well, why do you want to change it?" I was like, "because my dad is not getting his until later and I just want to do it under my moms," and to me I felt like, because of my race, she assumed that I wasn't just doing it just 'cos of my dad's not filing taxes yet because Hispanics, you know, try to cheat the system. So, because she's heard that people they'll choose one of their parent's income that's lower so that they get a better opportunity of getting a scholarship or a bigger grant or whatever. So, she's like giving me attitude about why I wanted to change it, "oh, because my mom makes less," and it's like, no really, it's just because my dad hasn't done it and I don't want to wait on him to do it so I just wanna do it under my mom's.
>
> So, I felt like she assumed that for me because I was Hispanic, that I would want to cheat the system. It really, it just kind of made me angry. That we try to get the SNAPS or food or any kind of aid that we all think that should be given rights or whatever? I mean, I hear that a lot you know, especially about illegal immigrants. They just think that immigrants try to get everything, so we try to cheat the system.

Based on her tone, the financial aid administrator racially stereotyped Luciana, assuming that she wanted to "cheat the system" by tricking the financial aid office into giving her more money than she might be entitled to. Although the administrator did not say anything explicitly, her explicit tone was enough to indicate the stereotype she may have had in mind. This was offensive to Luciana, and she remembers this incident clearly to this day.

In a similar example, Heidy retold me an incident that happened at her workplace in a university office. Contrasting her story against the racist parties that so many other respondents had already described, suggesting that it was a minor incident but that it "still really bothered" her. She explained,

> I was at work and this guy came up to me and he asked me like what I did and if I was student at U of S and then he asked me "Oh, where are you from?" and I said "My parents are from Guatemala" and then he was like "Oh, so do you like it better here than in Guatemala," like, "was your experience like you like it better than living there? Um I'm pretty sure your experience getting here was challenging." I can't remember exactly what else he said next but then he kind of *implied that I'm illegally* and that I have more opportunities here than there. I lived [in Guatemala] for like nine months but I didn't really live there … I was really frustrated and I couldn't really do anything 'cos I was at work.

In this interaction, the older white male implied things about Heidy that she found offensive. The stereotypes he implied in his comments were clear to Heidy. Indirect, implicit comments such as these maintain a veil of benign conversation and often times take the approach of underhanded compliments. At the same time, they are tied to racist stereotypes and stories about Latinas/os that work to reproduce racial inequality. In Heidy's case, they have a traumatic effect as the event had happened several months before and the event continued to have significance in her life.

Both forms of direct and indirect racism can be conceptualized as *racial aggressions* because they draw on anti-Latino white racial frames that achieve the same outcome of racially categorizing Latinos as racially different and inferior to whites. Together, they work to remind Latina/o students of their racial difference and supposed inferiority despite their being college students. Humiliation, caricaturization, and classic stereotyping remain core elements of the racial aggressions that Latina/o college students face. Because they take the form of social interactions, racial aggressions (both direct and indirect forms) have the potential to be more visible and noticeable for respondents. However, the invisible forms of discrimination often take the form of a lack of interactions. In addition to facing racial aggressions, Latina/o students often face

significant forms of exclusion from valuable academic and social settings that inhibit their integration into the university.

## Racial Exclusion from Academic and Social Spheres in College

Respondents described experiencing exclusion from the curriculum, or other potentially academically enriching opportunities. These forms of exclusion are important because they not only could have provided avenues for academic success while in college, they can also inform decisions to not persist in college. In other words, according to predominant educational theories, without social and academic integration students are more likely to make the decision to depart from their university. While students can be socially and academically excluded for any number of reasons, racial exclusion is a subtle form of racial discrimination. The following two sections describe a few of the numerous accounts of racial exclusion that respondents shared.

### *Academic Racial Exclusion*

Respondents described events where they had lost potential learning opportunities in learning environments because their culture is excluded from the classroom. It is important to note that all students could have benefited from the real-world experiences that Latina/o students had hoped to address in their classes. In this way, all students were negatively affected by racially exclusive academic settings. However, Latina/o students were more directly impacted by their exclusion from the curriculum.

Consider the following example from an interview with Marisol, a fourth-year at MPU majoring in art history and education. While she stated that she had successfully acclimated to the predominantly white social environment, the fact that her culture and

background were left out and even discouraged from being brought into the classroom was a problem for her:

> Marisol: …it's still a struggle, like, being the only minority in classes and whatnot.
>
> DO: Why is it a struggle?
>
> Marisol: Uhm, I guess, like, me personally, I'm an art major so presenting work I focus a lot of, like you know, my background, my culture and then having other people not understand where I'm coming from it's, like, a constant struggle because I'm defending it or I'm trying to explain it to them and they're kind of, like, clueless or don't get it. In that aspect.
>
> DO: Can you think of an example of what you're talking about?
>
> Marisol: In regards to my artwork, a lot of my art work focuses on, like um, gentrification and, like, in [my neighborhood], my photographs deal with that, uhm, and also the femicides in Ciudad Juárez [Mexico]. So, portraying a lot of that in my paintings where most of my professors in class made some "never heard of it" comments or don't know what I'm talking about or don't get it, and it either upsets them or they just don't care to learn about it. Or I'm like, "guys, it's going on now" and they don't get it.
>
> DO: What do they say when they don't get it and/or they get upset, what happens?
>
> Marisol: Uhm, one example is like my professor who was very against me, uhm, working in that genre or theme…he would be more critical and just *questioning me a lot and making a lot of side comments*… I guess it was more, like, *the smirks and the greetings* he would give me and the, like, "well, why are you doing that?" and then *he, like, laughed when I presented* my stack of, like, research, like cases I actually looked into …

For Marisol, it's a struggle to incorporate her culture and her background into her artwork because the curriculum excludes Latina/o-related issues. Often times, she explains, her professors were simply ignorant of Latina/o issues and so they neglected such topics. More importantly, however, some of her professors actively discouraged

Marisol from pursuing the social justice perspective that she wanted to incorporate into her work that focused on her own background and culture.

When students tried to incorporate their perspective in the classroom, it is often faced with resistance not only from white professors but also the majority of their white peers. For example, Matias, a third-year majoring in education at U of S found that he got a negative reception from his peers when he attempted to raise attention to racial and ethnic perspectives in his special education class. He noted,

> Matias: I noticed that whenever I ask a question, because I want to learn more about how it affect the minorities…. For example, in this one class we were talking about speech pathology or speech problems, and I was like, well, how does this affect bilingual and multilingual students or parents of bilingual students, 'cos they don't address those questions in the curriculum, and I want to know because those are the people that I'm going to be working with, and people are just like, I get that vibe sometimes like, "he just want to know -- he's just asking those questions because he's Mexican, you know," and even then, I don't understand they're point because we're in the United States, it's very diverse, we're in this state, which is very diverse as well, and you're going to be working with those types of students as well … I don't understand why you're limiting-- if anything, I feel like my questions are helping you, not hurting you.
>
> DO: Why do you think that, what gives you the impression that they're thinking that?
>
> Matias: 'Cos I have seen and noticed that people just, like roll their eyes, or stuff like that. And I don't ask that many questions either, I just want to make sure that my professor addresses those things. And the professor is Caucasian, she does a decent job, but I feel like she doesn't, she acknowledges white privilege, but I don't feel like she does much to address it. She aware that it exists, but that's it. She's just aware that it exists.

Along the same lines as Marisol's experiences with attempting to incorporate a Latina/o-oriented social justice perspective, Matias observed that his white professor did not do enough to address white privilege and racial injustice in class discussions. At the same time, the annoyed "vibe" that he received from his white peers reinforced the classroom

environment that was hostile to perspectives that are not silent on issues of white racial supremacy and non-white oppression.

Even when social justice issues take place in the classroom, white teachers often manage these discussions poorly. Take for example Angel's criticism of his professor's execution of a "minority representation in the media" unit. Importantly, prior to this part of the interview, Angel had already taken issue with the professor's classroom management techniques when discussing issues around racial inequality and oppression. He explained,

> Another thing. That same teacher. 'Cos we were talking about minorities in media, but when he said minorities he was talking about females, he didn't touch on Latinos or blacks…So, I was hoping for him to touch on Latinos but, nah, he only touch on women. And his question was, um, "guys," he first asked, "ladies, what do you think about women's representation in the media?" and girls started saying, "oh, we don't think we're represented in the media enough," or whatever. So first he asked the ladies and then I was like oh he's gonna ask the guys now so I was gonna give him my point of view and he was like, "alright, all my white males can you give your opinion on what you think?" and I was like "damn, well he said white males" so I didn't, like, bother raising my hand… So, I mean, I thought he was being messed up.

In this classroom interaction, the professor attempted to create a dialogue about representation in the media. Perhaps the professor was also attempting to highlight the patterns in discourse based on how we embody race in the classroom, i.e., white men may tend have an especially privileged view about women's representation in the media, thus perpetuating such inequalities. However, Angel walked away from the class with the lesson being that he was not white and thus that his perspectives and voice mattered less. This event depicted a poorly executed discussion tactic on the part of the professor

that quite literally excluded Angel from participating in the classroom *because he was Latino*.

A pro-white curriculum executed in college classes buttressed a white supremacy social dynamic in the classrooms that Latina/o students occupied alongside their white peers. This served to reinforce their exclusion from the classroom as well as from the curriculum. Their academic exclusion was not powerful enough to influence their non-incorporation into the university, they were further excluded from social contexts that could have otherwise supported their educational persistence and, potentially, their long-term socio-economic outcomes after college.

***Social Racial Exclusion***

A prevalent form of social exclusion included when Latina/o students attempted to join mainstream social organizations. Typically, these organizations have direct ties to the university including powerful and successful alumni networks that can provide students with mentorship, information, and internship and job leads. When respondents are rejected, typically they are one of the few minorities attempting to join. For example, in an interview with Juan, he recalls when he tried to join a spirit organization at U of S known as the Rattlers that was comprised nearly completely of white men:

> Juan: after I crossed into the fraternity I wanted to be a part of the Rattlers. The Rattlers are a spirit group, but they're more of an alumni organization, and they're the guys that take care of Pete, our mascot, the Rattlesnake, like the live snake. And they do a lot of philanthropy, and things like that. And going in there, this was my second year. And going in there, I was the only nonwhite person in our group. They sorta interview us in groups and I was the only nonwhite person and I stood out. And the reason I stood out was because I didn't have a blue blazer. They were like, you now, just come business casual, which means coat but no tie. And I was like, okay. So, I put on like a black blazer, and black pants, you know. I just dressed you know, without a tie, but still formally. And

> everybody else came looking exactly the same. Which was brown boots, khaki pants, white shirt, blue blazer, gold buttons. All of them white. And that's the first time that I have ever felt out of place. Because I didn't look like them, I wasn't dressed like them, I didn't talk like them. And…
>
> DO: how did they talk?
>
> Juan: Uhm, you know, just different. a lot of them were also white, they were Greek. But they were WFC [white fraternity council] …it's basically all the big, you know, like the actual, rush, and parties, and have Greek houses…

In his example, Juan reflects on what made him feel like he stood out in the interview to join the Rattlers, a prestigious social-spirit organization on campus. He explains that he was left out of the group and the main difference he identifies, in addition to a plethora of class-based interview tactics with which he was unfamiliar, was that he was not white. The fact that he was different was apparent to him in the way he dressed for the interview, the fact that they belonged to mainstream predominantly white fraternities, and that the way they talked was also different. These could also all be conceived of as racialized differences in dress and mannerisms, wherein many whites are accustomed to dressing as the members of the Rattlers do and Juan was not. Juan also spent a lot of time examining why he did not get admitted to the organization, highlighting that the questions they asked were unfamiliar to him for an interview. He explained,

> Uhm, the only one that really stood out to me was, they asked, "if you stack quarters, one on top of each other, how many would it take to reach the height of the empire state building?" That's the only one that stood out to me. And the reason it stood out, I don't remember what I said, but they said I had gotten the closest from anybody else. And another thing that stood out to me was that at the end, they had a table kinda like that, and they were all sitting down, they had some current members, some other members, like I said an alumni organization. And they had some old guy sitting there. It was like a panel. And at the very end they had Starbursts lined up all along the table. And they were like, "oh, please take a Starbursts as you leave." And that threw me off, because I had never heard of this interview question before. I didn't see the purpose or whatever. But I did,

> and I ended up taking a pink one. And then I thought about it later, and I was like, maybe I should have taken an green one, you know, for U of S pride.
>
> But like the actual questions that they asked, I remember that they asked me what I want to do, and they asked me about politics. 'Cos I'm interested in that and I want to go into politics. And they asked me what do you think about national issues, blah blah. … And I did give them my opinion. … I didn't really give them like my answer. … I felt like, I also felt like I was giving them an answer they were looking for, just because of who they were. 'Cos most of them felt conservative to me. But I wasn't sorta lying about my answer. Maybe I'm a little bit more towards the middle than I actually said. But that's actually the only question I can remember that they asked me.

Clearly, the interview process included challenging questions. However, the questions Juan describes above appeared more like a form of "weeding out" process in that only people with pre-existing ties to the organization could know the correct answers. If this was not enough to drive home the point that these are racially exclusive organizations, Juan mentioned the organizations that the Rattler interviewers belonged to, noting that they belonged to an organization that had participated in the racist party on campus which had taken place the semester before:

> And this was right after Xis had hosted, had hosted a "Mexican" themed party. And it was a big deal. There was a protest at the Xi house. And out of the Rattler exec board, 2 out of 5 were Xis. And so, I got interviewed. And everything went well. But I didn't get a call back. And they were like "yeah, you know, I'm sorry, but we're just not gonna, like, you know, you weren't offered a place."

While the executive board members of the Rattlers that interviewed Juan may not have been individually involved in the racist party, Juan's mention of it points to his race as one of the core reasons for which he was excluded from the organization.

Typical of these interactions, racial difference is an underlying component that works to maintain racial homogeneity in the organizations. While students are not denied explicitly because of race, the outcome is the same and the process works to reproduce

racially exclusive organizations. Brandi described a similar event when she was attempting to joining a women's social and service organization that was comprised nearly completely of white women. She described how she felt like she didn't belong,

> I guess it started when I first came to STU, like yeah, I got along with my FOCO group [a first-generation learning community], but I guess how I was so used to being friends with so many people in high school, I was kind of hoping for that in college and just not getting that pushback back or not really getting accepted in different groups. I remember I applied and I had some interview for some "Southern Belles" thing – women in leadership organization -- and I didn't get accepted. And uhm I never knew why, I knew it was a predominately white organization, but I was hoping it wasn't because of my race. I was hoping it was because I had a bad interview, but I guess at that point I just started feeling like well, I didn't get accepted in this organization, how do I expect to get into any other organization? Things like that. So yeah, at that one point, I did feel lonely and that I didn't belong.

The fact that the organization remained predominantly white and that Brandi, one of the few minorities attempting to join, along with the fact that she was a top student, very sociable, with lots of extracurricular experience, made her feel less-than, alone, and excluded.

Respondents also experienced discrimination in the form of racial exclusion from predominantly white fraternity and sorority members. When interacting with white fraternity and sorority members, the respondents felt a deep sense of racial exclusion. Even in situations where interaction and collaboration between Latino-based and predominantly white Greek organizations is encouraged, respondents found themselves the recipients of discrimination and exlusion. For example, Luciana described a recent incident that took place at the official fraternity house of one of the predominantly white fraternities. The event was a workshop on Risk Management among Greek

organizations. She prefaced the story by explaining that "At this point, this is the most passive racism that I experienced, which made me really mad." She shared:

> So we got to the house 'cos it was hosted out of one of the WFC houses. We got to the house and everyone is kind of with their own group or whatever we try to mix and mingle but, anyways, the workshop starts, we're listening to I don't know who it is but we're listening to their part of the workshop. I mean you know, safety of housing, guest lists, or whatever it is. And then we get to someone else and they do their spiel and then we get to Shanice -- The MGC Adviser. And she's about to do her part. She wants to do hers a bit differently. So she says, "okay guys, let's get into a soul train line, so everyone get this…" and MGC and BGC the Latinos, we're excited. Because we're probably gonna walk or dance down the soul train line thing. *But the WSC and WFC people freak out.* They just are really not into it and so it took us forever to do the two lines because they didn't want to be the first people they didn't know which one was first, they tried to find a way to not be the first ones to go.
>
> Then we finally get it together. They have the music on and Sade is trying to get the first people to go and so the white girl's just so embarrassed. The other person is I think an BGC person is really into it and he's doing it (mimics dancing motion). And they try to keep doing it but after the third person, WSC or WFC person, can't remember if it was a guy or girl but he or she runs out of the house and all the WFC and WSC people run out of the house. So what is left is just BGC and MGC people. We were just left there. *They just left.* So it was just BGC and MGC people left there.

Even in instances where white students are compelled to interact with Latina/o students in a context where they all have the commonality of being members of the university Greek community, the white organization members refused to engage with non-white Greeks. Keep in mind that this is after the fact that racially segregated organizations continue to exist. Even after the fact that severely limited interaction takes place between whites in predominantly white organizations and nonwhites in predominantly Latina/o organizations, white members were unwilling to interact with Latina/o and nonwhite peers. For Luciana, this reaffirmed the belief that White students are unwilling to engage with Latinas/os and will reject them if this is attempted.

With the repeated pattern of racial exclusion occurring in colleges and universities, it is no surprise that feelings of racial alienation are common among respondents. These feelings are confirmed through racial exclusionary dynamics where respondents are turned away from interactions with white Greeks or treated with indifference. Take for example my conversation with Uriel as he describes his experiences at MPU:

> I do know there is discrimination. Like there is, some type of, "you are not allowed in here" type. Like during rush week, the first parties I went to were white fraternity row parties like Delta Pi, they'll let you in, but *they wouldn't talk to you*. They'll welcome you in, like, "Oh, hey, come on it." You could tell, they didn't want you there. You notice it. They're not going to recruit you to join. Because for some reason they won't. And me? I don't care. Like, because I don't give a f*ck, I'm gonna go in here and drink your beer. I've seen some African Americans and some Latinos [in predominantly white fraternities], but I feel like they are white washed, from the suburbs, and no connection to their culture or to their roots whatsoever…
>
> At some parties, I'll be honest with you, they didn't let us in. They'll be like, "Do you know anybody here?" But they didn't ask the guys in front of us and just let them in, and they were white. As a freshman, I didn't know, I was just like, "no, we don't know anybody here," and they'd be like, "well then, you can't come in," and we'd be like, "oh it's cool, don't worry about it," and we went to the next one. You can tell there is a lot of racism within the white fraternities. It was my first weekend here. It was the first time I went and walked in to those houses. We left like maybe 10-15 minutes after we went into each house. Because, *no one ever came up to us or tried to talk to us. We were just in our own little corner.* Everyone just stuck to their own little group and they saw us and they were like, "whatever."

As Uriel describes in his story, he and his friends were effectively given the cold shoulder when he was in the predominantly white fraternity's house. This demonstrates how, even when Latinas/os are "welcomed" into predominantly white settings such as in the case of white fraternity houses, they are socially excluded from interactions. At base,

we can observe how these forms of racial exclusion in social and academic university settings can serve as negative experiences for Latina/o college students.

## Conclusion

At first, Latina/o students appear to enter colleges and follow conventional trajectories for educational persistence, as clearly shown by their initial culture shock experiences. However, it quickly becomes apparent that a significant lack of diversity exists at predominantly white universities, wherein white students maintain numerical and cultural dominance. It is likely that this makes the racialization experiences Latinas/os report more salient in their minds. This made respondents acutely aware of how they were perceived through a white racial frame. At base, respondents were racialized through the white racial frame, including these everyday realities: being perceived as uneducated, intellectually inferior, underprepared for a selective university curriculum. In addition, exposure to the white racial frame caused respondents to have emotional reactions to them. For example, feeling sadness or fear in reaction to the racial framing of Latinas/os. Ultimately, Latina/o students were unable to relate to white students based on racialized class and cultural differences. In this way, respondents were racially alienated from their peers, and unable to form successful positive relationships with their white peers in college, whom remain the majority at predominantly white universities.

Ultimately, racial alienation and segregation from white peers does not spare Latina/o students from experiences with discrimination. Respondents described incidents where they and/or their friends were the victims of racist aggressions from white agents

of the university. In addition to facing direct racism, respondents faced indirect racist aggressions that came in the form of both individual insults as well as large scale racist campus parties and events that targeted students of color. Finally, respondents also faced significant racial exclusion in academic and social spheres which catalyzed the racialized nonbelonging they felt at their university.

Concerning existing models of educational persistence, it is clear that there exist significant differences between the experiences evidenced in this study and the processes generally understood through traditional models. Consistent with other work on Latinas/os that demonstrated that culture and ethnicity remain central to the experiences of Latina/o students (Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel 1991), I find that culture, as well as racialized class dynamics are central to how students experience their college social integration. I also find that through various elements of the white racial frame, Latina/o students are also made aware of their racialized status. Consequently, they are also racially alienated from their white peers, limiting their integration to the majority of the student population in their university.

As I examine in the next chapter, respondents also reported a number of racist aggressions from white professors, administrators, police officers, and peers that, in addition to creating a sense of racialized nonbelonging, also point to a veiled institutional process that I refer to as "delegitimation" in "white racial places."

# CHAPTER III

# TOWARDS A "WHITE RACIAL PLACE:" RE-CONCEPTUALIZING RACE AND SPACE IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITIES

In this chapter, I examine the impact of racist aggressions on Latina/o students' relationship to their university. The lengthy list of racist aggressions that respondents reported included interactions where they were rendered either *hyper-invisible* or *hyper-visible* by the white majority at their university. I then examine how respondents viewed their experiences with racist aggressions as representative of their university experiences, thus causing them to view the university as a hostile environment. Finally, because identity and how students view themselves is at the center of these experiences, I suggest that the more conceptually rigorous term of *white racial place* more precisely describes predominantly white universities that marginalize Latina/o students in profound ways. This idea is based on a "typography of university identity conflict" which outlines the paths through which Latina/o college students experience identity conflict with their university's identity. At base, I find that Latina/o students are not viewed as *legitimate* members of the campus community causing a number of different reactions, including re-claiming the university identity or reject it altogether. I begin the chapter by introducing a framework for identity in college and then outlining the concept of the "white racial place."

**"Inside and Out:" Looking at Identities in College**

There are a number of reasons that identity should be examined in relation to educational experiences. For one, students maintain multiple identities at the same time, including personal, social, and institutional identities. Personal identities may include familial ties (e.g., sister, niece, daughter), social identities may include race, class, and gender identities (e.g., Latina, working class, woman) and institutional identities include those associated with the institution one is embedded in. These vary by institution, in the case of students in colleges and universities, their institutional identity is that of their specific institution (e.g. Southern Tech "Eagles").

An identity constructionist framework is central to this study. This framework suggests that identity is an ongoing process wherein people's identities are constantly changing (Cornell and Hartmann (1997). Concerning Latina/o racial identity, Dowling (2015) takes a similar approach and suggests that identities are both externally imposed and internally claimed, she writes: "racial and ethnic identities are the result of an ongoing dialogue between external assigned identities from others and internal asserted identities" (p. 8). Distinguishing racial from ethnic identity, Latina/o scholars have previously suggested that racial and ethnic minorities have defining characteristics, wherein racial categories are externally imposed, while ethnic categories are self-chosen (Vasquez 2011).

Conversely, I herein argue that Latina/o cultures are continuously racialized. For example, in my study I find that, while the cultural disposition of Latinas/os are not known, they continue to experience racialization by the imposition of the white racial

frame, which includes the assumption of cultural disposition such as not speaking English, the mocking of Spanish accents and cultural foods, assumptions about skin tones associated with Latinas/os, and the use of cultural symbols to stereotype the group. At the same time, respondents in this study navigated the imposed racial meanings by also proclaiming some to be true.

As I describe later, I find that racial oppression in college results in multiple paths for social identities and integration into the university community. Social identities such as race, class, and gender, interact with institutional and personal identities such as student, sibling, community membership. While all of these identities is the result of an interaction between external imposition and internal assertion, I suggest that a context of systemic racism at an institutional level results in reifying racial inequalities in college (Appendix E).

**Mapping Race on Campus: The "Where" of Racism Matters**

As I briefly discuss in Chapter 1, sociologists have explored the patterned behaviors and interactions that people of color experience in what have been termed "white racial spaces." Moore (2008) found that there are a number of institutional practices, such as the employment of colorblind discourse from administrators, that work to make predominantly white law schools particularly hostile towards students of color. Highlighting these institutional practices, Moore suggests that we conceptualize predominantly white law schools as "white *institutional* spaces" to reflect the lengthy history of racism at such institutions.

Aligning with this conceptualization, in her study of black pilots and airline professionals, Evans (2013) found that because the airline industry is dominated by whites, and based on the social experiences of black professionals in the field, airplanes are also effectively white spaces. Evans found that there is a lack of black airline professionals, and those few in the field often experience invisibility and visibility through what she calls "the look." In this "look," whites glare in contempt when they see a black airline pilot presumably because they are "out of place" in white minds, violating unspoken rules about blacks' social status.

More recently, focusing on the experiences of black men in white spaces, including white owned stores, businesses, offices, and neighborhoods that are predominantly white, Anderson (2015) found that white spaces are those in which black men experience a "white gaze," through which they are hyper-surveilled because they are black and presumed criminal and a social problem. In a parallel analysis, Lipsitz (2011) has described what he terms the "white spatial imaginary." In the white spatial imaginary, because whites have historically benefited from racial neighborhood segregation and all the resources attributed with this, when blacks enter the neighborhood, it is considered a type of trespassing of the racial boundaries and so it is perceived effectively as a crime. In this way, the persistent use of geographical racial boundaries in white minds creates what he terms a "white spatial imaginary" surrounding what he believes should be theirs.

An important strength but also a limitation of white racial space and associated concepts is that the researchers are attempting to build a theory that encompasses all the

types of racist social interactions that can occur in any number of settings – stores, offices, businesses, organizations, neighborhoods, etc. Regardless of the location, the interactions are the same and dictate whether the setting maintains the characteristics of a white space. Although they employ the space term, I believe Feagin, Imani, and Vera (1996) set a strong point to begin to understand how students of color experience racism in *specific colleges or universities*.

The authors find extensive data demonstrating that widespread use of racial epithets but also symbolic, indirect racism remain a reality that black students must endure. The authors find that a lack of black representation among faculty and university leadership was a key factor creating a negative academic experience for black students. They also find that black students encounter racist symbols at their university, such as a statue of a famous Confederate leader. The authors suggest that these factors contribute to a racialized space within the university that does not give black students recognition. As the authors write, "the type of recognition that others give to an individual creates a "place" in the structure of a particular social institution" (p. 15). In this way, students have no "place" in white spaces.

However, I suggest that the "space" element of the white space concept has a major limitation when applied to colleges or universities. Just as predominantly white universities have symbols each university also has a unique history, and related traditions, mascots, and missions that together constitute its distinctive institutional identity. As a result, what constitutes the difference between place and space is the idea

that a place is not interchangeable and a space is comprised of social dynamics that can occur, in theory, anywhere.

Considering that personal and social identities are paramount in student integration into college, it should be no surprise that respondents described having racialized experiences that cause conflict with their university identity and their Latina/o identity. At base, a university is a white racial place when it's agents designate and police the boundaries around the university identity by questioning the status of nonwhite students. While any person can be an agent, I find that agents are most commonly white and most commonly affiliated with the university. Often times, however, people outside of the university will act as agents when they question whether Latina/o students actually attend a prestigious, predominantly white college or university. In sum, white racial places are colleges or universities with identities that are policed and reserved exclusively or primarily for whites, and wherein Latina/o university students are routinely delegitimated of their status in their university.

**Hyper-Visibility and Hyper-Invisibility: Twin Processes of Delegitimation in the White Racial Place**

Respondents described having experienced forms of what I term hyper-visibility and hyper-invisibility. Racist aggressions characterized by hyper-visibility and hyper-invisibility are interactions or events that serve to *delegitimate* Latina/o college students' presence at predominantly white universities. Importantly, these experiences delegitimate Latina/o students by questioning their belonging at, as well as their identity as students of, their university. A student is delegitimated by white agents of the

university when their membership of the campus community is drawn into question and their status as students is, in the eyes of others, removed or minimized. At their core, these aggressions serve to set boundaries around the university identity so as to sustain it as racially-exclusive place. I provide examples of respondents' experiences with hyper-visibility and hyper-invisibility in the two sections below, followed by additional experiences of delegitimation and Latina/o students' responses to them.

***Hyper-Visibility***

Hyper-visibility refers to the idea that Latina/o students attract unwarranted attention based on their presence at a predominantly white university. Thinking back to the story retold from my field notes in the opening chapter, we can see how Latino students were outright asked if they "belonged" in the university library, that is, whether or not they were *actually* students. Recall that the group of members of the Phi Fraternity were simply studying together in the library when a white male student questioned their presence there. Recall also that this story demonstrated how whites attempted to control the boundaries of who belongs at the university. While in that first story the white student confronted the Latino students, in most cases, their presence is questions through a "white gaze" that effectively encapsulates and coveys the white racial frame without words and through a "look." If the white racial frame includes stories, stereotypes, and emotions about a nonwhite group, then the white racial gaze is the means by which those stories, stereotypes, and emotions can be conveyed to a target.

Consider Miguel's story about a recent road trip he took to another university with his fraternity brothers. Miguel recalls when he went to an elite, large university in Wisconsin and the "look" he and his fraternity brothers received while there.

> We went to the what there is their student union there. I wanted to get a University hat 'cos it was really cold. And we were there, and it was just all white people. It was just me, and a couple brothers. And they looked at us like … a look … and I was just really surprised, and I told one of my brothers that actually goes to school there, "Ay bro, why they look at us like that?" and he was like, "oh, that's every day." He's like, "yeah, here's the thing you don't realize. At MPU it's like 20 percent minorities or something like that but here it's like 9 percent." So, I was like, okay that makes sense. So that was racism, in a sense.

Miguel does not mince his words when he describes the "look" as having a racist element to it. The lack of diversity certainly highlighted the experience at a new (and still predominantly white) university campus for him. In this way, his presence drew unwarranted attention and he was almost immediately aware of this fact. Effectively, the message he received through the white gaze was that he was a racial outsider and did not belong in that university.

Respondents also interpreted the "look" they received as a general form of disrespect. This is not surprising given that the white racial frame re/produces anti-Latino sentiments that are meant to subordinate people of color and to spread the idea that they are inferior to whites. In this way, respondents often described situations where they were put in the spotlight. For instance, Brandi describes how she has often been hyper-sexualized:

> In a work place, at school, even on my powerlifting team, and in social settings, I don't believe Latinas are respected. One thing that disturbs me is that people *hypersexualize* Latinas, and make us seem *as if we are exotic*. My friends, who are not Latinos, would mention that they would love to be with a Latina so that she can call them "papi." It was funny the first time, but when I heard it in

> different occasions it became uncomfortable. They always said they would want to be with a Latina and with a sexual connotation to it, they made those comments as a joke but it was disrespectful to me, and it made it seem that they had no respect for Latinas in general and that they saw us as *foreign objects* instead of human beings.

In Brandi's case, she was made hyper-visible when she was indirectly hypersexualized by her white male friends. Notably, this occurs in settings affiliated with her university, her powerlifting team, suggesting that these processes have the effect of re-creating a racially exclusive campus. The fact that Brandi is the only Latina in some of her friendship groups located within the university, suggests that her friends comments have the effect of reminding Brandi of her social position within the university as well as outside of the university: a racialized sexual object, in Brandi's case.

When Latina/o students were made hyper-visible, their subordinate social position along race and gender lines was made more salient to them. In some instances, Latina/o students were made to feel like their presence at the university was a problem, while in others, they were fetishized. In essence, this "look" was a reminder that they were outsiders at their university.

***Hyper-Invisibility***

If interactions can be characterized by hyper-visibility when they had the effect of reminded Latina/o respondents of their subordinate racial positioning both within and outside of the university, then what does being ignored mean for Latina/o students? I refer to experiences of hyper-invisibility as when Latina/o students are treated as less important than white students, neglected, or ignored in interpersonal interactions or

academic settings. The outcome remains the same, Latina/o students are made to feel like outsiders in their university.

Brandi, from the previous example, also detailed moments when she felt especially invisible; having received no recognition of her presence in university settings. Consider the following example from the same interview with Brandi. When I asked her if she'd ever felt ignored or neglected because she was Hispanic, she described the following scenario:

> Brandi: I think occasions would arise here and there, probably on a bus or things like that. I know I felt that on a bus, uhm, but it really didn't faze me that much. I just felt like "oh I'm probably thinking too much about it, maybe it's not that big of a deal, or maybe it's probably not what I'm thinking," so, but not that I can recall like every detail.
>
> D: Did something happen on a bus?
>
> Kaylynn: Not something happened, just stuff like if I'm on bus and uhm, I think there was times where I get on a bus and it's just who get up for others. Like oh, there's guy sitting and he sees me walking, he won't do anything, but if someone else is behind me he'll be like "oh here, have my seat," things like that.

Because the occasion occurred "here and there," we can assume that this type of interaction was repeated frequently. When Brandi was simply ignored, she felt slighted by her white male peers, who typically, in a gentlemanly fashion, would offer their seats to white women students. The fact that the interaction was frequently repeated made it a form of "everyday racism" that Brandi felt on the bus (Feagin, Imani, Vera 1996; Essed 1991). Interactions where Latina/o students noticed that they were being ignored or neglected by their white peers, purposively or not, were common among respondents. Examining this in relation to hyper-visibility, the processes work to delegitimate the student identities and presences of Latina/o college students.

Whereas in racial exclusionary processes (described in detail in Chapter 2), Latinas/os were initially engaged and then rejected, in interactions characterized by hyper-invisibility, Latina/o students are altogether ignored and not acknowledged. One example of this could be found in who is invited to join predominantly white sororities and fraternities. Agustin noticed early on in his first year at U of S who the members of predominantly white fraternities sought out and who would be welcome to join. When I asked him if he ever considered joining a predominantly white fraternity, he replied,

> Not, not at all. Because I, I never got approached to them, see, I saw them, but I was never approached by none of them and, and I knew people that say that they were going to join, but they never like said, "hey man, come to one of our events" or anything like that, you know? Like, in Burnside Dormitory, like, a lot of the people that lived close to me they were like "oh, well I'm going to join this mainstream fraternity," but they never said "oh you could come," you know, "come with us and join with us," you know?

When it came to even prospectively joining a predominantly white fraternity, in the minds of his white dormitory peers, Agustin was not a viable prospective member. He was in that moment, in their eyes, effectively *invisible* to them. This experience and feeling was prevalent among respondents. In a similar example, Vicente observes how he is largely ignored in the classroom by his peers and how this continues to this day:

> Southern Tech, generally, I really really disliked it at the beginning. Just because I go into a classroom, and honestly, [this continues to happen to me] to this day, I go into a classroom and I sit in the very first three rows, and I usually like to sit in the middle, and I have yet to have a person, particularly a Caucasian person, sit to the right or left side of me. And when like I see other people that might not even know each other, and they sit around each other, and they're like, "hi, my name is so and so," and they get to meet each other and kinda say, like, "oh hey, let's study together." And I'm over here just alright cool, I'm doing things by myself, no worries. Um, it got to the point where honestly, it doesn't even faze me anymore. But in the beginning, it was just kinda like I felt like, do I smell?

> Like, do I give off some kind of … I don't know. It just got to the point where it was annoying me…

Vicente notes how he feels really annoyed that, even "to this day" he continues to experience this type of invisibility in the eyes of his white classmates. In this case, the fact that he is ignored by his white peers as a potential study partner could also have negative academic outcomes in a very practical sense. Latina/o students may experience this invalidation of their presence or, in instances where they are required to interact, they may experience an invalidation of their views, effectively rendering them invisible in plain sight. For example, Miguel described the general impression he gets from his white peers in the classroom, which parallels Vicente's observations above. In Miguel's group work, which is very common in his engineering courses, he is one of the few racial minorities in class, as he noted, "it's just me and then the rest of my group members are white or Asian or whatever." Importantly, his group members largely ignore his contributions:

> From other students whenever we work, like, in a group discussion and stuff like that. Uhm, I just feel like sometimes whenever I say something in the group, like, they can't, like, they don't, you know, they don't, they don't give that, um, reciprocity with, like, "oh, okay, I like what he said", you know, like, "I will pay attention to what he said," and, um, and usually it's not that way, you know. They're like, okay, whatever. They just hear what you say and then they just, you know, finish the discussion, you know, but I feel like when other group members, whatever they have to say, they feel like they do, you know, like, it means a lot and, like, you should listen to it, you know. But whatever I say, like, it doesn't make sense or they don't have to listen to it.

White students did not give the respect that they gave to other students when Miguel participated in group class assignments. In his experience, white classmates paid attention to the contributions of other white students or Asian students. Not only does

this reveal how Latinas/os are racially framed differently than other people of color, but it also demonstrates how Latinas/os can be rendered invisible in plain sight. In this way, they are effectively deprived of a voice in their college experience.

Notably, respondents described events that occurred both when they were alone and in groups or associating with the members of predominantly white fraternities and sororities. On an organizational level, Latina/o fraternities were not given the same level of respect that they had for other organizations. In this way, on an organizational level Latina/o fraternities and sororities were also ignored and neglected. Respondents felt that these types of events reduced their contributions to the campus but also that it was disrespectful given that they are Greek organizations just as the racist white Greeks are.

When Latina/o fraternity or sorority members attempted to reach out to predominantly white fraternities or sororities, they are often made to feel less-than or nonexistent. Consider the experience that Luciana felt was very disrespectful to her sorority. When her sorority sponsored a male contestant in a predominantly white sorority-sponsored campus-wide pageant:

> I guess so I try to do an open-minded thing again, so I do the "Big man on campus" event and that is with Kappa Kappa [a predominantly white sorority]. And we road coach for one of the contestants, then, two weeks ago, it was like a donate coin change towards the boot of the guy that you want to have points for. So, I had, me and Mario [Phi Fraternity], "hey, come with me to Ward [a central campus building] so I can donate and that will go towards my contestant.' And so, I see my box the box behind the boot of our contestant and it says, "Eagle Marching Band," 'cos that's where the guy's from, and it says, "Beta Alpha Sorority," and I was like, so upset.
>
> They couldn't even get our name right. To me that is just really disrespectful. Even though we're not WSC you should have checked our name. You have our application and so many things you can look at. It's Alpha Beta Sorority, not Beta Alpha. So, I was like, "hey, could ya'll change our name 'cos that's not our name, it's Alpha Beta." And she was like, "oh that's fine," and she

> just scratched it out and wrote it on top. I was like, "Actually I would really appreciate it if you could put a new tape because it's not as uniform as the other boxes." She was like, "Okay, let me find the tape," and then she finds it and she tapes over the [second two letters] and tries to write over it and then I realized that like, even Alpha was spelled wrong. They spelled it "Alpa." They didn't put the 'h' in there. And so, I was like, 'actually, you need to do the whole thing because you didn't spell the Alpha right.' And I'm just like [there feeling] so disrespected because like my name, our name wasn't even right and they can't even spell a Greek letter.
>
> If my organization is donating money to this event that's sponsored by them, they need to get our name right. I was like, "this is disrespectful, honestly, *this is disrespectful to us, because you didn't get our name right* and you can't even spell Alpha." Like, I don't know, it doesn't matter who was doing it. Whoever was doing it had to it right if you're representing this organization. And one of the girls was like, "okay, we got it, it's under control." She didn't say it but like "okay, we're gonna fix it," kind of like a stern kind of annoyed kind of thing … Just because we're a Latina sorority and we're not a WSC sorority doesn't mean we don't get the same respect. *Being a Latina sorority people think we're not the same level of Greek. Because we don't own a house, or 'cos we don't look like the Greeks that social media has put out, we're not as Greek*.

In the example above, Luciana is reacting to how she feels she is being mistreated by the members of Kappa Kappa. The organizers of this annual campus-wide event paid little attention to the Latina sorority's name. Importantly, Luciana describes the event as disrespectful. She explains how, even on an organizational level, Latina sororities are viewed as less legitimate than predominantly white sororities, most likely because they lack the resources and publicity that they maintain. Importantly, this demonstrates how because Latina sororities are racialized they are treated as less-than and rendered hyper-invisible.

In general, respondents' interactions with predominantly white sororities and fraternities were characterized by disrespect in the form of hyper-invisibility. In a similar example, Angel told a story that underscored how disrespectful it was that their organizations are quite literally treated as unimportant and invisible. He explained,

> Recently we had an All-Greek Community Meeting. Like two, three days ago. And it as not just minorities, it was also with white fraternities and sororities. It was at Ward Theater and that shit is -- it's huge bro. It's huge. And it was … I was amazed at how many members each white fraternity and sorority has. It was basically filled… they could have filled that whole auditorium just by themselves. It was a few minority, Latino fraternities and sororities. Including black fraternities and sororities. The thing was, it was mainly filled with whites, so there wasn't that many seats for us.
>
> So, they ran out of seats, they didn't have enough seats for everybody. Not just Latinos but also whites. So, I got to sit in this row with my fraternity and there was two seats left and my brother was right here [to my right] and at the end there was two seats left. And there was some white girls that sat on the floor. And me and this other brother we're behind that brother that had those seats available we were behind. And we started laughing, we were like, 'wait,' it was that laugh where it was like, "damn, that's f*cked up! They rather sit on the floor than sit with my brother!" And it was obvious. It was f*ckin' obvious that that was going on. I knew I wasn't making it up because my brother saw that too. We were like, "damn, they don't want to sit next to him, they rather sit on the floor!" But I said that kind of loud and I said it so they can feel guilty, right? Like, I was trying make them feel uncomfortable. So, I kept on laughin', laughing loud just so they can feel uncomfortable. I guess they ended up feeling bad so they got up and they sat there. And I was just, after that, I was still being loud, I started saying, 'they just doin' it 'cos I made 'em feel guilty!' (laughs) they were trying to ignore what I was saying, *but it was obvious that they didn't want to sit next to a Latino fraternity.*

As Angel describes, even in a circumstance where everyone has something in common – being in a sorority or fraternity -- the white sorority members decided to not sit in the only two available seats and to sit on the floor of the auditorium, and thus, to not interact with the Latino fraternity members. For Angel, it was obvious that the white sorority members did not wish to interact or be in close physical proximity to a Latino fraternity. This was a complex scenario wherein the Latino fraternity members were rendered *hyper-invisible*. But this was not the end of the event. Angel continued,

> And when the white fraternities and white sororities presented at the meeting they were giving an overview of their plans for the year. And then the MGC, that's the Multicultural Greek Council, came on stage for all the Latino fraternities and sororities. And they got on stage. And every time a white

> fraternity or white sorority comes on everybody would clap. Everybody would clap. You hear claps from everyone. MGC comes on gets there and no claps. Just like two or three (claps). It was to the point those girls that I made feel uncomfortable? They clap. 'Cos they knew that Latinos were getting no love. And same with the black fraternities. I think it was more of a minority thing. I don't want to exclude it to Latinos. They noticed. That's how I knew damn. That really made me realize. We're still not fully accepted. I'm not saying they hate us or whatever. … 'cos they don't accept us and I don't want to be begging for their acceptance. I don't need -- we don't need their acceptance. I don't think the Latino fraternities and sororities need their acceptance. *But being realistic, we're never gonna be fully accepted by them. And it's shown. It was shown by that meeting. No claps? I mean, at least fake it. You don't have to scream, just clap. Out of respect.* I mean you clap when you're at a play. You f*ckin hate the play, you still clap. It's out of manners, right? Uhm. Any event you go to. You don't know the people doing the play. You don't know the people that are playing the instruments or whatever it is, but you still clap! Because you don't want to make it feel awkward. M*therf*ckers didn't clap. They didn't.

In the scenario that Angel describes above, he alludes to how a typical audience and presenter interaction involves clapping as recognition of their presentation. At best, the audience appreciates and agrees with the presentation content, at worse, the audience acknowledges the presence of the speakers and recognizes that they have completed the presentation and that they are ready to move on to the next presentation. For Angel, clapping is a form of basic consideration and respect for anyone giving a presentation. Markedly, even when the Latinas/os were quite literally *on stage* and in plain view of their white peers, they were rendered invisible when white peers did not giving recognition to their contribution to the series of presentations. By not clapping, and not acknowledging the Latina/o students' presentation, white students delegitimated the presence of Latinas/os in that context.

Taken together, experiences of hyper-visibility and hyper-invisibility point to how Latina/o sorority and fraternity members are treated as illegitimate members of the

campus community while on campus. That Latina/o college students are not readily perceived as college students stems from the white racial framing of their group. In the next section, I demonstrate how drawing from the extensive stereotypes about Latinas/os, respondents are often deemed as non-legitimate students because they are Latina/o *even when they are far away from campus*. Importantly, we can observe how the policing of the white racial *place* of the university because they occur both on and off campus highlight how universities have a status, and a racialized identity.

**The Boundaries of Place: Outside Agents Delegitimating Latina/o College Students**

Latinas/os are delegitimated of their status as college students in a number of ways. This is demonstrated above by the twin processes of hyper-visibility and hyper-invisibility. In hyper-visibility, they are either given unwarranted attention, often bringing to light a racialized "look." On the other hand, the same student may experience at another time a social interaction consistent with elements of hyper-invisibility wherein they are ignored and their presence is neglected.

Interestingly, Latina/o college students are also delegitimated by agents *outside of the university* that serve to undermine their *deserving* to be at their university. As a result, their legitimacy as *authentically* deserving students is drawn into question. This also takes a number of forms including but not limited to white friends undermining the accomplishments or merits of Latina/o students, or white police officers not believing Latina/o respondents when they reveal that they are students at a prestigious, selective predominantly white university. Consider for example Yolanda's experience that she shared in a personal story about how her white high school friends, many of whom are

not attending college, often undermined her achievements. Yolanda's scholastic accomplishments are important because they earned her (and not her friends) admission to Southern Tech as well as a number of merit scholarships. She described how her white friends reacted:

> Yolanda: They would say things like, "it's because you're Hispanic, it's because your mom is a teacher," or they knew my parents were divorced, so "oh, it's because of that."
>
> DO: How did that make you feel?
>
> Yolanda: It kind of sucked because these were people that I'd gone to high school with all four years and had same classes, same group projects. I went to their house, uhm, they came to my house. … But what they don't understand, and I've actually had to explain myself, and my mom told me you know, "you should never explain yourself," you know, "you just do you." But a lot of the scholarships that I did receive were community service-based or involvement-based, and I was very involved in high school, like *very,* very involved and that's what I got my scholarships for…
>
> DO: So, they were making assumptions?
>
> Yolanda: Yeah, they were making assumptions and it kind of I guess it kind of sucked because like I said these were people that I saw every day, hung out with and stuff like that. Even, it kind of stung the times when my best friend would make comments like that, but I think it's because she, she knew that I was hardworking and busy and stuff and that I did a lot. Uhm, you know, when I talk to people about this stuff, you know, I've done college all four years myself. Everything extra, Alpha Beta [sorority], all the traveling, all my honor societies that I'm in, that's all like, everything that I cover.

Clearly, Yolanda is a high achieving student and she attributes her successes to her hard work. Her white peers, however, attribute her successes to anything but her hard work, most of which allude to forms of "affirmative action," implying that she has been given unearned advantages. Yolanda's white friends have drawn into question whether she is legitimately a student at Southern Tech. For them, Yolanda's attending of a prestigious

university is not of her own merit but rather because she has benefitted undeservingly from affirmative action programs. Yolanda's status as a deserving and rightful student at Southern Tech is delegitimated by her white friends.

In a parallel example, Adriana described an interaction with her white friends who attend a smaller public university about an hour away, when they visited her at MPU. Adriana took the hurtful comments personally. She commented,

> Adriana: When my [white] friend was on campus, sometimes she would be like "oh, he only got that scholarship because he's black," or you know, like some people are very against the- they have instilled in their minds that sometimes scholarships are given and they focus on the minority population, and that's the only reason why they get a scholarship.
>
> D: How does that make you feel when they say that?
>
> Adriana: I mean I can understand her situation because she also came from a low-income household, but because she was white and her mom did go to college, she was excluded, you know, she was kind of in that grayish area of being low-income but not being first generation and being white. Uh, so I can understand why she would be upset, but at the same time *I felt personally attacked*, uh, and I didn't feel it was fair…

Similar to Yolanda's experience with her white friends, Adriana believes her friend is resentful of minorities for their being at their university and having received the support they have. Even though Adriana's friend did not make the comment directly to and about Adriana or Latinas/os in general, Adriana took it personally because her status as a Latina student was also being indirectly questioned. This also served to create boundaries around who deserved to be in college and more specifically, who deserved to be at a prestigious university like MPU.

White agents routinely policed the boundaries around who was deserving and thus, *legitimately* attending the predominantly white universities. In some instances,

student status was literally questioned by law enforcement officials not affiliated with the university. For example, Miguel and I had the following exchange:

> Miguel: I went home for the summer, last summer. And I was driving and uh, I pulled a U-turn where I wasn't supposed to and a cop stopped me. It was actually three cops, three cop cars. I was really surprised like, what?! And I stopped, they pulled me over and [the cop said] "you know what you did?" and "yeah, I pulled a U-turn, I'm sorry." And it was a place where everybody pulls a U-turn. And I'm like you know what, forget it, I'm tired. And I apologized for the U-turn. But he was like, "who's car is this?" I say, oh it's my parents. I came home from college for the summer." He was like, "oh, what college?" I gave him my registration, identification, and insurance, and he's like, "oh, what college you go to?" "I go to the MPU." And he was like, "oh, really?" I was like, "yeah, came home for the summer," he was like, "Ha. Okay." And I was like, "you know what, this is the first time I've ever been pulled over." [Thinking] He'll let me off with a warning. He asked me, "do you got your MPU ID?" And I'm like, "no, I don't, I have it at the house." He was like, "Alright, I'll be right back." and he took like 20 minutes. Wrote me a ticket. Here. Whatever, he explained everything. I actually got a ticket? A one-hundred-and-sixty-dollar ticket. He was like, like, "don't be pulling U-turns anymore." And uh "be safe" or whatever. And maybe, I'm thinking, it was a racist act. He, when I didn't have my M-card and I told him I went to MPU, he was like, "ha-ha, okay." *He didn't believe me.*
>
> DO: So, you think that cop didn't believe you because you were Latino?
>
> Miguel: I think so. I honestly think so… he was probly like, "oh, he probably goes to community college because that community college in that suburb is all, it's all the minorities. I didn't have my M-card. *And I don't understand why he asked me for my MPU ID card?*

It was noticeable that Miguel still grappled with understanding why he received a traffic citation that day. He suspects it was a racist act. More importantly, he didn't understand why the police officer needed official identification from the university to prove that Miguel was *actually a student*. The fact that Miguel effectively needed to prove that he was just a college student to the white police officer points to the undercurrent of Latina/o college students delegitimation.

Interestingly, across the country Ramiro had a very similar experience. Ramiro described how he's been profiled and has been stopped by police when driving his car a number of times. On these occasions, he's felt the need to explain that he was a student at U of S. He told me,

> We've been pulled over, uhm, well yeah, like my friends and I, we've been pulled over; me with them there was like four times and then by myself it was like two or three. …But you know I even got pulled over by an officer on a bicycle. You know like he pulled me over and then you know rather than telling me oh uhm- what's it called? "You know like this is the reason why I pulled you over", he is like, "step out of the car." He put me in handcuffs, laid me down on the ground, and searched my car. And I smoked at the time, like I just smoked cigarettes or like blunts, uhm like cigarillos, and so you know he even gave me a horrible stereotype. [He said,] "you know what these are for- you know what people, people like you use these for, right?" I was like well "oh my gosh, I mean I just do regular- I just- you know, I'm just smoking tobacco, you know." He's like "no, you're not." And so then you know, he went in and started looking more. So, he didn't find any, I mean, I only did that for like a little bit, but I mean that was 'cos I was you know I was back home. After I came here, you know like I completely took it off. But you know, simply the fact that you know he categorized me with that you know…

In describing the interaction, Ramiro explained that when he was off-campus he was pulled over and was aggressively searched and even stereotyped by the white police officer on a bicycle. Later, when he finally got a chance to speak to the officer, he explained that he was a student and offered to show him his student identification card. Not finding anything illegal in the vehicle, the police officer would let Ramiro go. Ramiro struggled to understand the traumatic experience. When I asked him what he thought about the police officer's behavior, he replied,

> It's like, well, you know, why- why is that? You know, like being questioned, why is it that, you know, like I have been pulled over a bunch of times so it's like why is it that I get pulled over and I have to show my student I.D. at U of S in order for the officer to take me seriously, you know like why is that I have to talk

> to them in a "certain tone." You know, and so, you know like I used to laugh about it, it's like you know the moment, I greeted them, I said "sir," and then he took me seriously (laughs) but you know, there's nothing really funny about it. You know like it's- it's institutional racism, you know, or prejudice... That's the way it is and I mean, you know, looking back it hurts, you know, like it just hurts that you got to put- you got to make yourself *legitimate* in order to be taken seriously, you know. And so, I mean- it's happened -- it's happened more times... (italics mine)

As he processed the event, Ramiro began to question the entire interaction. He asked why it was the case that he had repeated unjust interactions with police officers and why he, in his words, needed to make himself "legitimate" in order to gain some respect from the police officers. In Ramiro's case, unlike Miguel's interaction with police describe above, the officer let him go after not finding anything on him and after he addressed the police officer in a "certain tone" that deferred to the police officer's authority status in the interaction. Ramiro had to reaffirm his status as a student to the police officer who did not see him first as a student, but rather white framed him as a suspected criminal.

In both off-campus instances, the legitimacy of Latina/o students' status is drawn into question. When white agents from outside of the university questioned whether Latina/o students were actually members of the university community or whether they deserved their status with the university, they effectively delegitimated Latina/o students' presence at the university. Taken together, we can begin to see how Latina/o students are not legitimate because, in the view of many white agents, the university is a white racial place.

**Connecting Racism to the University**

The experiences of Latinas/os at predominantly white universities can have a negative effect on their relationship with their institution. Upon being delegitimated,

Latina/o students begin to view their university more critically. In effect, "the university" as a place, are represented based on the experiences that students have while attending the institution. The following examples of Latina/o students reflecting on the racism they experience in college can highlight how students can negatively experience elements of their university. After these instances, we see how they begin to link the university as a place where racist aggressions are bound to happen.

I began to notice how Latina/o college students experience their university after a major intercollegiate football game at Southern Tech. I arrived to a house where Eric, Mario, and Santiago live together about 15-minute drive away from campus. When I arrived, Mario opened the door and welcomed me in. He was on the phone with his mother, speaking a mix of Spanish and English explaining what he had eaten, what he was about to cook, and what his plans were for the rest of the day. The house was scantily decorated minus an unframed painting that portrayed Aztec tribesmen as they surmounted a high mountain. I sat in the living area on an old, lumpy couch. As Mario concluded his conversation, Eric and his girlfriend Blanca arrived, and then shortly after that, Santiago and his girlfriend Nicole arrived. As we all sat in the living area, Mario took a few beers out of the refrigerator and we they talked about how they had all just gone to the big football game against a major rival university. Without much thought or effort, nearly everyone began retelling stories of racist aggressions that they had experienced at a college sports and other university-sponsored events.

> Fidel: *The only reason why I don't like going to stuff is because people always end up saying some racist shit.*

Eric: Yeah! at Pep Rally, we heard this couple were having a conversation, and I only heard the last part, but the guy replies to the girl, "yeah, I guess that's what you get when you mix a Mexican and an Irish – A liar."

DO: Were they white?

Eric: Yeah, they were white. We just looked at each other like … (makes surprised and disturbed face)

Fidel: That's nothing. A group of students, just before the national anthem, were talking about the whole Colin Kaepernick incident, they were like, yeah, and the guy's like, "did you hear about Colin Kaepernick, he's not standing for the National Anthem at the games," and the girls were like, "no, we haven't heard about that, why?" And he was like, "I don't know, something about Black Lives Matter," kind of downplaying the cause and making it seem like it's not a big deal, and the girls were like, "what? *That's so stupid, why would he do that?*"

DO: What race were they?

Fidel: Yeah, they were all white (as a matter of factly tone). He was really downplaying the whole thing and the cause and that he was doing something meaningful. He was just being really ignorant and racist and we were just like, what? (Disbelief) Then *another* time, at Pep Rally, we over heard this conversation behind us and the guy was just saying something about how he hates that all these minorities get all this financial aid and benefits and don't do anything with it, "I could use the help too," he said… I should have turned and waived and said hey, thank you! Your tax dollars at work right here!

Nicole: Yeah that reminds me of when people talk about, I hate when people talk about undocumented immigrants.

Eric: (Turns toward me) Yeah 'cos you know, they actually pay into Social Security and they don't get any of the benefits from it. They actually benefit the economy. They pay into it.

Nicole: Yeah.

Fidel: Another time, we were sitting really low, close to the field and there was a group of guys saying to his friends, "hey, why aren't you standing up faggot?"

Clearly, if the respondents were not already aware that they will be exposed to racist aggressions, a brief conversation with their friends will make clear that they should

expect to if they attend university-related events. Not only were the aggressions directly against Mexican Americans (anti-Latina/o), but also Homophobic (anti-LGBTQA), and anti-Black Lives Matter (anti-Black).

It should be no surprise then, that respondents interpreted their experiences in university events negatively. Notably, these types of candid group conversations occurred in settings away from official campus grounds. These conversations also typically pointed to racist aggressions they had experienced from white peers or maintained the assumption that they happened without doubting that they could occur again. As a result, many respondents voiced perspectives that at the lease acknowledged a racist institutional culture at their university.

Respondents often shared perspectives that demonstrated how they believed that racism was a semi-permanent feature of university life. For example, Uriel points to the lack of diversity and how that affects how he views racial inequality within the university. When I asked him if he had experienced any racist aggressions while at MPU, he described the occasions he had. Then he explained his assessment about the discrimination he had experienced:

> I have thick skin, right? But at the same time, I tend -- I tend to see problems amongst MPU differently. I feel like it affected the way I see it, because like, I never really cared about it to be honest. I thought (smacks lips) "it's always gonna be like this. *It's always gonna be like this. You can't change it."* But I feel like we could because we're a part of one of the organizations that has changed it or helped it, helped better it. So, when it comes to that, I am more aware of it, I was aware before but not as much, because it is like a big issue – diversity. It comes back to diversity. But at the same time, we're not, I feel like, I'm not trying to be a pessimist but I feel like it's only so much you can do in general when it comes to that.

For Uriel, the lack of diversity and issues associated with it at MPU have caused him to feel helpless when it comes to changing the university. At the same time, his fraternity gives him hope for changing the university for the better. Diversity, in his view, is one of the major institutional issues. The feeling of helplessness that he feels is a cause of broad-level institutional processes that are out of his control.

Others have also pointed to the ways that fraternity and sorority activities, as a force for positive change, have been constrained due to the same institutional processes. Take for instance Vicente's indicting explanation for why his chapter has difficulty recruiting new members that are not Latino. He said,

> I think it's here, I think it's honestly, the university. When it comes to other chapters, they're quick to embrace other cultures, other ethnicities. I have African American line brothers, I have Caucasian line brothers, um, Asian line brothers [at other universities]. But when it comes to here, though, it's just so difficult. It ticks me off in the sense that I'm always there to help people out no matter what, again, especially being gay, I've had issues where acceptance has always been important to me, so why am I going to turn people down for their color of their skin, their sexual orientation, or religion, or any of that stuff. I'm a big advocate for acceptance… But I mean if you're not gonna acknowledge the fact that I'm here, why am I gonna acknowledge the fact that you're here too. And I think that's the thing that gets a lot of people, especially here at Southern Tech.

Something about Southern Tech prevents interaction and integration within Vicente's chapter as well as within the student population. Compared to other universities, according to Vicente, his chapter is not as racially and ethnically diverse as it could be. This upsets Vicente personally because of the marginalization he has experienced because he is gay. The culture of racial and social segregation at his university.

Ultimately, these experiences lead to mixed emotional reactions to the university. Sebastian emphasized that he for example, when I asked Sebastian how he felt about attending a predominantly white university, he replied,

> Lucky and sad. Lucky because I haven't had it that bad, but sad that I'm going to a school where they're so friendly and so loving, but yet this is happening almost on a daily basis. There is this one Asian girl that they were, some white guys, like, really, they [were] high, pretty high up [in a building], and she was walking, they were throwing her, like, um, ice, ice cubes and, like, one hit her eye. She got pretty bad. Like, no mames.

For Sebastian, the contradiction between the promoted "friendly" and "loving" culture of the university and the racist aggressions he had experienced cause him to feel fortunate personally that he had not experienced direct racism but sad that he attends a university where it is prevalent. With a tone of disbelief, he notes that his Asian friend experienced direct racist aggressions.

Becoming aware of racist aggressions and how frequently they occur at the university solidified a connection between the institution and racism for respondents. This is further demonstrated when I asked if they felt that the university valued Latina/o student presence on campus.

**This University is Racist and Doesn't Care About Latinas/os**

To be certain, students experience their university through their interactions with other students and other university agents. Since a number of respondents experienced their university in negative terms, it should be no surprise that they interpreted their value within the university in negative terms as well. A common theme among respondents' perspectives on their university was that the leadership and administration in general does not care about Latina/o students. At best, respondents had ambivalent

feelings about whether their university cared about them and students from their background. At worse, and most poignantly, respondents believed that their university was generally racist against Latinas/os.

For instance, when I asked respondents if their university cares about Latina/o students, Andres responded with ambivalence:

> I would, I would say that, um, because I would say that now they're starting to because I don't think the, the major Mexican American Studies existed when I first got here. I think it wasn't added until, like, a couple years ago. So, I can see where they're, they're trying to shift more that way, *but there are some times where I feel like not so much.* Uhm, there was another event that happened last year, the Xi's Fraternity, They, um, they threw this, like, "crossing the border party," or whatever, where a lot of them dressed up like stereotypical Mexicans. They had sombreros and, um, you know, mustaches and "green cards," or whatever, you know what I mean? Um, so, you know, it, it wasn't right at all and the word got out about it so a lot of, um, a lot of us Latinos were really mad about it and we protested. There was a march where they, they marched to the Xi House, of course, like, none of them came out. But, um, and then I remember this, so, so we were wondering, okay, what's, what's the president going to do about this, but I remember everybody was questioning what's he going to do because this was around the same time that, I don't know if you heard about the one that happened in OU, at Oklahoma University. There was this video that came out where they were using the n-word and… chanting.

Andres believes that the university is progressing toward a more inclusive culture that values Latinas/os as demonstrated by the fact that they added a Mexican American Studies major. However, at the same time when it came to the university addressing the racist aggressions perpetrated by predominantly white fraternities, and the subsequent protest of Latina/o students, the outcome was different,

> So, this was around the same time that this happened and I know that *that* organization got kicked off campus so everybody was like, okay, like, what's going to happen or, or what's the consequence going to be? Are the Xi's going to get kicked off of campus for doing this? Or, like, what's going to happen? Are they going to pay a a fine, or are they going to be, you know, put on probation for a semester or what? So we're waiting, anticipating. *Nothing. Nothing happened*

> *at all and so one, this one guy wrote a letter to the president and it was published and he was basically calling the president out and saying, like, like shame on you for, for not doing sticking up for us Latinos here on this campus. You know, the fact that this happened and, and you're going to sit here and do nothing about it, you know, what's up with that?* So, seeing that I was kind of like, you know what, yeah, like, does the university not value us as well? you know what I mean? …Things like that it, it has made me think, like, are, are we being under appreciated, are we being undervalued because we're Latinos at this university. But then, you know, you'll see some other things happen, like, with them trying to open up more programs for Latinos to learn more about their own history.

The fact that there was no action on the part of the university to defend Latina/o students from racist aggressions signaled for Andres that the university does not value Latina/o students. At the same time, the fact that they offer Mexican American Studies programs signals that the university does value Latina/o students. At best, for Andres, it is a mixed bag.

Recounting the same racist party that many other respondents describe above, Matias came to the realization that the university unjustly favors some students over others. For this reason, he is comfortable making a bold statement like "U of S was racist."

> Matias: Yeah, I mean, I didn't know U of S was racist up until last year. I found out it was racist. Nothing personal, no, but actually it was personal, because it affected me. I don't know if you heard about last year the racist party that happened. Where a bunch of people were not happy with it, the way people dressed up. And they even had like a screen where you could take pictures and um like, it was terrible language that they used to express themselves, oh like "illegals" and stuff like that. And the university republicans, they had a "catch an immigrant" event, did you hear about it?
>
> DO: Yes.
>
> Matias: Yeah, that was like a big one. So, it was basically, they would have students with red shirts with the word illegal and undocumented. And a person had to catch them and bring them to the detention center. And whoever would catch the most would get like a $50 gift card.

> DO: When you say that you didn't realize until recently that U of S is racist, do you think that the university condones that kind of behavior, as in from those fraternities?
>
> Matias: Mhm. They try to uhm justify it with freedom of speech. *But how come the freedom of speech of certain people is respected more than other groups*? Uhm, had it been a multicultural organization that had done the reverse, that had done the same thing against another culture, something else would have happened, like they would have been punished, the multicultural and Latino organizations would have been punished. But since the party, the people that threw the party they are *in a white fraternity* or whatever you would like to call that, a really expensive one, it's like $6,000 per semester in fees. And uhm, and there's that stereotype that they're parents are lawyers, and the university doesn't really want to mess with them because it would be a big lawsuit. So, this is where privilege comes in.

White students, namely those in predominantly white fraternities and their racist behaviors are tolerated by the university. Matias is critical of the official decision of the university to not pursue any disciplinary action against the predominantly white fraternity that held a racist party at their house. He perceptively recognizes that "free speech" is a mechanism by which wealthy white students maintain privilege and protection at the university. In this way, he believed that the university catered to whites, protected their rights, while leaving Latinas/os to fend for themselves.

Similarly, Ramiro extends this logic in his example. When I asked him if he thought his racial identity had impacted his experiences in college, he answered yes, because of the stark inequalities that the university fails to account for. He explained,

> Like one instance was the uhm the flooding that happened last week it was horrible. And I mean you know like U of S like didn't cancel school whereas like you know the local Community College did. And so you know like it's kind of like the way that they cater towards students, that they cater more towards certain populations than others cause you know they take into consideration those students who have the money to live on campus, those people who live on North Campus, and which you know are predominately you know white whereas you

> know people who live off-campus are mostly like Latino or African-American you know especially like in Riversouth and that's where the flooding like happened worse… Not everyone could've been able to make it to campus and [the university] put their safety on the line because you know they didn't take them into consideration.

For Ramiro, the fact that the university did fully consider the implications of the decision to not suspend classes when there was a major flood in the area points to who they are catering to: wealthy, predominantly white students as opposed to those who live in the racially segregated mostly black and Latino areas. In his view, the university did not care for their safety and well-being.

Many other respondents were unhappy with how Latinos are incorporated into the university. For example, in an interview, Ivana alluded to an incident that had happened at Southern Tech where a group of visiting black and Latina/o high school students were victims of racist aggressions from white Southern Tech students in addition to the lack of full incorporation of Latina/o culture and history into the university.

> DO: Do you think the university cares about Latino students?
>
> Ivana: (Pauses) I would say no, because, like, in like, for the Hispanic Heritage Month they only focus on Latinos, like, for that amount, that set amount of time. That month…that we do celebrate it, and like, what happens the rest of the year? Are we not important to them?
>
> And like with the stuff that happened when the high school students came around, like, they kind of just dismissed it as an incident. Like, well this stuff never happens at Southern Tech kind of stuff. Although I, I've never experienced that kind of stuff, like acts of racism and hate myself, like, other students have said that they have. Like it's not a one-time thing, it's a daily thing. And the way that they addressed it was, like, oh it's, like, kind of important, but like, it never happens. I feel like they're not really, I guess they don't care about us in a way.

Here again, the fact that the university dismissed racist aggressions as "incidents" caused Ivana to feel like the university did not value Latina/o students. In addition, the general lack of interest in Latina/o related issues "the rest of the year" makes Ivana believe that Latinas/os are not important to the university.

In these cases, the absence of addressing racism on campus, incorporating Latina/o issues into the general events and programs of the university outside of a designated "month" make students feel as though they are not valuable members of the campus community. Similarly, when respondents look for other Latinas/os, they are unable to find them because the university does not provide space for them on campus. Take for instance how Dolores felt when she got to campus. She explained,

> Okay so let me first start off by saying that U of S does not have a high percentage of Latinos and it's hard because … I would search, you know, like, I would look around and be like, oh, like, *where are the Latinos at*, like, *where are the Hispanics?* Where can I find them? You know, and it's just, they don't have a dominant presence here. Not at all. Like, um, even, like, the African American community, they kind of have their central location on campus like where you know that you can find them or you kind of see them around because it's kind of like where they hang out or, like, where they interact. But there's just not-- for us, that place is not anywhere on campus.

For Dolores, the fact that there are so few Latinas/os at U of S indicates to her that the university may not really value their presence there. Insightfully, she notices the importance of physical place at the university when she comments that Latinas/os don't have a central place for socialization. In her view, this is indicative of the fact that the university doesn't care about Latina/o presence at the university.

Coming to the realization that the university does not care about Latinas/os in combination with the previous realization that racism is very likely to occur at the

university, makes for an unsettling relationship with their university for Latina/o students. Considering that Latina/o student identity is constantly delegitimated by the recurring processes of hyper-visibility and hyper-invisibility, it should be no surprise that student find conflict in their personal and social identities.

## "What Makes a Good Eagle?" A Typography of Identity Conflict in the White Racial Place

How Latinos view their relationship to the university, that is, whether or not they fully integrate into it, can be summarized through how they relate with the university identity. Recall that each university has a unique identity, complete with traditions, rituals, mascots, and symbols. Respondents fell into several categories, including embracing either: a limited identity, a delegitimated identity, or a resistant identity. I describe each below before providing examples of each. A figure depicting the typography is included as Appendix E.

### *Limited University Identities: "I am an Eagle, but…"*

A "Limited University Identity" refers to how Latina/o respondents viewed themselves in relation to the university identity. This is encapsulated when Andres stated, "I mean while, I still love this university. Of course, you know. You know, racist things like that tend to happen." In reference to racist events that had recently taken place on campus and how he viewed the university, he explains that his "love" or his attachment for his university is *significantly limited* and constrained when he observes racism happening on campus.

In this way, many respondents explained that their integration into the university identity is again qualified because of experiences related to racism within the university. For example, when I asked Agustin if how he felt about identifying as a Rattler, he explained that his identity as a Rattler had conditions:

> (Sighs) I mean, I wouldn't necessarily-- like, in some, in, in certain environments I will say I'm a Rattler, but then, like, in, in other areas I would say, um, I'm a Latino. Like, let's say, in a football game, I would definitely say I'm a Rattler, but then I wouldn't say that in, like, in the classroom, you know? Like or, I wouldn't necessarily, … like, like if another person from the university is like "oh, you're a Rattler", you know, like, we all are, yeah, but I'm Latino, you know? So definitely, like, in the, it matters in, like, the, which environment you're in. Which area of the university you're in … I wouldn't necessarily say I'm a longhorn in the classroom.

Agustin explains that his identity as a Rattler is not consistent throughout different contexts and settings. It is significant that he explains that in the classroom where the majority of his peers are white and all are Rattlers, his identity as a Latino becomes salient. In this way, his integration into the university is limited by the various forms of racism he experiences in college, including a significant lack of diversity in the classroom.

Whereas Agustin viewed his university identity as being limited by contextual factors, others described the university traditions at-large as having caused some restrictions in their ability to identify with the university identity. In these cases, respondents described circumstances surrounding the university culture around school spirit that limited their ability to identify fully with the university identity to its full extent.

Consider how Tanya interacted with the Southern Tech traditions and had to qualify how much she identifies with her university identity. When I asked her if she felt like she could identify with her university identity at Southern Tech, she replied,

> Well, maybe. I don't really know. I don't know. The mainstream student population is dedicated and motivated, of course, they get really involved in leadership positions. But this is my first semester where I'm taking it really easy, I'm only taking one class, I'm working full time. I'm just taking it super easy this semester. But most of the time I'm involved in at least two or three organizations and I hold a position in at least one of them. So, the ideal student Eagle is very involved. Although when it comes to like traditions and stuff, I'm a no-co. I don't care about going to the games. I don't really know all the chants, I just kind of mumble with everyone else.

In some ways, especially concerning the university mission, Tanya could see herself as a Southern Tech Eagle. However, in other ways, concerning traditions, she is not. In this way, she embraces the identity of the university in a very limited way. Similarly, other respondents observe how Latinas/os are not fully considered in the decisions of the university, causing them to limit how much they can see themselves as a full member of the university community. For example, Ramiro had much to say about this dynamic.

> *I love U of S* but there's like of a lot of power structure in terms of culture and also the way that you're looked at, you know. Especially in sorority/fraternity life like there's like a lot of like there's *huge disparities* in terms of that, and I mean in terms of how it's affected me. It's like there isn't like isn't like certain representation in certain areas like you know student government uhm just kind of involvement in those places that you know actually make a difference. Like well I mean I am not saying that you know like Latino orgs. don't make a difference but you know there is those orgs. that do have like greater power and so I mean there there's just a misrepresentation of Latinos in those circumstances which kind of like drives away you know like pushes you away from certain areas.
>
> So, like the other day I saw like a co-op ad it was like uhm for people who are graduating, it was like, you know, "Send your invitation to your rich uncle who you haven't seen in a while," and well, it's like, who are you catering that to? You know I don't have a rich uncle, like, I don't have a rich uncle in terms of money-- but they are rich in heart -- but you know they are not even

> here and so you know it's kind of like umm *I feel like U of S caters towards certain populations a lot more than others.*

For Ramiro, because the university (through its agents) cater more toward students who are familiar with the reference of a "rich uncle" as well as those who may actually have a rich uncle. More importantly, the advertisement confirmed in his mind that Latina/o organizations are not considered in general in the decision-making processes of the university. In this way, they are continually underrepresented, causing him to be pushed away from the university.

Students had a limited university identity when they adopted the identity or enjoyed the campus culture but with major caveats – usually a general dislike for the racism they endured. In this perspective, they maintained the university identity but had a number of forces pulling them from fully embracing the university identity without any qualifications. As I discuss next, how others viewed Latina/o students was the basis for a delegitimated identity within the university.

***Delegitimated Identities: "I Know People Don't See Me as an Eagle"***

Consistent with the theme detailed above wherein Latina/o students' presence and belonging at their university are delegitimated, respondents found that their university identities were delegitimated as well. Whereas in the *limited identity* theme Latina/o students find that they identify with their university but that this is limited by respondents' experiences with racist aggressions, in a delegitimated identity, Latina/o students acknowledge that they are not viewed as full members of the university, thus causing them to again limit their embracing of a full university identity.

One of the major subthemes of a delegitimated identity was when students acknowledged that a majority of white students did not view them as equal members of the campus community. Consider Ivana's experience, who, although she participates in the university traditions, feels that she is treated like less than a full member of the university. This is likely because, as she explains, most people do not view her as a "Southern Tech Eagle" since they do not think of Latinas/os when thinking of the university's reputation:

> Ivana: You know, I'll do the little [university hand sign] and, you know, I guess wear red all the time and wear cowboy boots and, you know, but when people think of Southern Tech, most of time *they're picturing someone that's white* and it's like that's the truth…
>
> D: Why do you say that is true?
>
> Ivana: Because it's, *that's like our majority, like, when people think about Southern Tech,* I never thought of it that way until I talked to other people about it. They're just like oh, well, it's, like, mainly white, you know, and it's like people know that. I don't, didn't. People do. And, even if you look at, for example, like, let's say you're watching the football game on TV and you, you know, they move away from the overall, like, football game and they move to the stands, lots of times *it's going to be mainly whites.* You're not going to see a lot of the minority mixed in and, um, so people will see things like that and so it, in our, in, like, people's heads whenever you think of, like, the ideal Eagle or the stereotypical Eagle, it's probably going to be oh, you know, a white person probably wearing cowboy boots, probably wearing red, probably sticking up the university hand sign with the class ring.

The racial composition of Southern Tech, both historically and contemporarily, has been dominated by whites. By definition, Southern Tech is a predominantly white university in both demographic composition as well as in student cultural and through its reputation. In this light, Ivana believes that this may cause others do not believe that she views herself as an Eagle because they are expecting an Eagle to be a white person.

In a similar example, Fernanda has experienced delegitimating of her identity and belonging at MPU when she has interacted with alumni from her other spirit related organizations. She explained that the university-related folks that do not view her as a legitimate member of the community tend to be the older generations,

> Fernanda: I guess when it comes to, like, the older generations because, like, but I think yeah with the older generations because, uhm, when they came to the university, uhm, it was very different. There weren't as many, um, minorities here, like, some of them were here, but there weren't many women here. Um, so and I, I've been realizing this thought, but, like, older people … So, like, if they see you doing something different from what it is now, uhm, they don't like it and they'll say something, they'll speak up, whatever. Uhm, and I feel like that's just people in, like, older people in general, like, because you go through college and you, like, it's the best time of your life, like, you did these things and then you leave and then when you come back, people aren't doing the same things you were doing… And it's kind of, like, what the heck? So, I feel like with the older generation it's like that, that that's where the conflict resides in being a Gladiator and being Latina.
>
> DO: Yeah.
>
> Fernanda: Yeah. With that, like, the older generations, yeah, um because, you know, they're, it's prejudice, it was mainly white people here so, like, that's where it just, like, "*are they really an Gladiators? They shouldn't be here, you know,"* so, some people do still think like that. Um, yeah, so I think the older generations especially [think that.]

In Fernanda's experience, especially when dealing with older alumni of the university, their displeasure with younger generations is related to the increased diversity of the student population. In their view, Latina/o students are viewed as not belonging at the university and not as fully legitimate members of the university community.

In Fernanda's case, her identity is delegitimated by broader perceptions of who belongs and who fits the racial profile of a MPU student. At the same time, racist aggressions can have the same effect. In Guadalupe's case, what prevents her from

calling herself a full member of the Southern Tech University community is tied to the process of hyper-invisibility as discussed above. When I asked her if she called identified as an Eagle, she replied that she loved her university and that she did identify as a Southern Tech Eagle. I then asked her if she identified as a "Bald Eagle." The Bald Eagle is a term used by university students to describe students who exhibited the utmost pride in the university and school spirit. "Bald," it is said, is a reference to the brashness with which students show their school pride. This can also be used to describe persons who are deeply embedded in the university culture and thus, may see themselves as full members of the community. Her response was telling,

> Guadalupe: I don't know about a *Bald Eagle*, but I guess, I don't know. Um, I know I call myself an Eagle.
>
> DO: What would hold you back from calling yourself a Bald Eagle?
>
> Guadalupe: My class ring (laughs) because I haven't gotten it yet. I -- I don't know. (Pause) Because sometimes there are things here that I kind of, like, like, annoy me and, uhm, but it's not nothing major. But I do love the school. I guess because, like, sometimes I forget, like, how much I love the, the school and how much I love the traditions, so, like, it's not until I do the things, like, some of the traditions like "Midnight Vigil" and then I remember like, "oh, this is why I love this school." This is why I came here. Uhm, so, um, I feel like I true Bald Eagle will only remember that and sometimes I don't.
>
> DO: What the things that annoy you that make you forget that you love the school?
>
> Guadalupe: Sometimes the people because, uhm, just, like, you get annoyed by them or, like, you know whenever they stand out at the Student Center or, like, right here in front of the Main Quad, like, holding up their things? Their signs like "go to this event" or "come join this." *I guess sometimes it annoys me when they do that or whenever they pick and choose who to promote it to and, I don't know, sometimes they don't look at you and then go towards somebody else. It's just, they don't look at me.*

Guadalupe's tone is somewhat apologetic when commenting on what annoys her about the university. In fact, she hesitates to mention the experience that make her forget what she loves about the university. When white students are promoting events or programs to the student body by handing out flyers, they continue to ignore Guadalupe. Her experiencing hyper-invisibility in this way caused her to not feel like a legitimate member of the university.

Finally, in similar examples, respondents described the relationship between experiences with racial aggressions and how they viewed their sense of belonging at the university which resulted in their feeling like less than full, legitimate members of the community.

> I mean, I am an Eagle, por que pues, I'm at Southern Tech. I'm soon to get my ring and diploma, so whether I like it or not, I am here. But, in the traditions and family ways, no because, um, traditionally, like, they'll get together, go to football games, but individually obviously, they're still racism and hatred going on.

Sebastian feels that if the university truly were an "Eagle family" as they claim to be, despite whatever racism continues on campus, there would be more unity and support. While he does not participate in many of the traditions, he argues, he is still a student there. He continued with a story from his experience in working as an executive member on the Multicultural Greek Council.

> [The MGC has] always wanted to do some type of event, an event with, uhm, the whites; WSC and WFC. Never happened. And I was there because we had an all exec meeting from all from all four councils, and we were really pushing for, like, something that forces us to have at least one, uhm, event together and, mainly WFC, the white boys, they kept saying, like, "oh, um, we really don't want to be held responsible if somebody besides us gets in trouble." And I'm just like um, *we* should be saying that because the people who get in trouble is usually WFC. You never really, really hear MGC or BGC to getting in trouble.

> Pero, we're still trying to, like, mingle with [them] and [they're] just, like, straight up telling us no. Fine. So, like in that aspect, like, no. *Like, the Eagle values are, like, don't exist.* They're just all smoke and mirrors. (italics mine)

Sebastian feels as though the values that are supposed to unite the campus community do not exist because white fraternity members are especially resistant to cross-council interracial events. He elaborated about what he meant when he said that the values don't exist.

> DO: What, what values are you referring to?
>
> Sebastian: Uhm, that whole, "you are family, I'm family," um, the "Eagles help," the "Eagles welcome home." I know, like, once I was getting, um, probably like four or five cases of water from our advisor's car and, like, I was pushing it and I hit like a little stump and, like, chingos of water fell down. People just walked past me, some couple of, like, um, one or two cars were, like, just driving next to me where I was at. Some of them ran over a couple of water bottles so, it just exploded. I'm like, well, f*ck. So, I just picked them all up as much as I could and I kept pushing. So, like, the whole traditions and, like, Eagle network and Eagle family doesn't exist to me. They, they probably would if I was a lot lighter.

For Sebastian, the fact that he experienced hyper-invisibility at a time when he felt he needed help from his community demonstrated to him that the values and family-like environment did not apply to him because he was Latino. He necessarily points to the fact that if perhaps he were "lighter" that is, if he could pass for white, then perhaps he would have gotten help from his white peers. Perhaps then, he might say, he would have felt like a legitimate member of the community and he would identify as a true "Eagle" and not just a de facto Eagle.

In this way, respondents described a number of circumstances that led to their delegitimated identity as authentic, full members of the university community. Broad level institutional factors contributed to this process. These factors include a lack of

equitable racial representation, the important value placed on predominantly white alumni body, and the direct and indirect racist aggressions from white peers. Their reactive identities reflect their interpretation of circumstances.

***Resistant Identities: "I Am / Not an Eagle."***

Resistant identities included two types of relationships to the university identity. Both can be characterized as resistance because both attempted to critique the university's indifference to Latina/o students and complicity in the racism of their white students. In the first resistant identity type, a student embraces the university identity despite having experienced racism at their university in an attempt to claim the identity for Latinas/os. In the second resistant identity type, a student will reject the university identity because of having experienced racism at their university.

Matias embraces the university identity though he recognizes and critiques the gross inequalities that Latinas/os must grapple with at U of S. For example, Matias described how his orientation camp made him feel out of place.

> Okay, I went to this orientation camp, which is optional for incoming students, it's pretty big for U of S culture, and uhm, and just pretty much to get to know other students. And that's when I felt out of place. It was a lot of fun, but I was like, this is like, there was like 100 of us in that camp session, I'm not even kidding, there was only like 3 of us that were students of color.
>
> I mean it's optional, and that's okay, and uhm, I just went to it because my dad was like "you should go." And I was like, "okay," and I just went. It was fun, but I did feel a little bit out of place at first. Because they keep telling us like, yeah, you're all Rattlers, that's all you should look at. At camp, that's what I got. You're a Rattler, you're a Rattler. Pretty much, *put everything aside*, *you're a Rattler*.

Matias felt out of place, not only because of the severe lack of racial representation in the orientation camp, but because the camp runners kept trying to erase his cultural and

personal identity beyond the university identity. That is, in his view, camp leaders included him in the university identity but were not inclusive of his other identities (i.e. his Latino identity). He continued,

> I mean, I was like yeah, I'm a Rattler, but *that's not the only thing I am*, you know. Yeah, that's true, that's the only thing we have in common, like, whatever, but *I'm not gonna give up who I am or like what I think* just because you're telling me I'm a Rattler right now. And you shouldn't shape a Rattler into one person.
>
> Because it's just like, you're pretty much telling me, I'm wrong, that my family is wrong, that whatever my family is doing or like whatever culture my family practices is wrong. And you don't mess with my family, I'm sorry. My parents have come a long way, and I'm very thankful for them. *And I'm not gonna deny who I am just to make you happy. I'm not gonna do that, I'm sorry*. If that bothers you, like I'm sorry we can't be friends. (Italics mine)

It bothered him because they were shaping his identity into the universities rather than the other way around; and he felt that they were trying to change him, rather than accept him in all his complexities. Matias demonstrates how Latina/o students claimed the university identity for Latina/o students in a way that does not attempt to assimilate him by erasing his culture and background.

In a similar example, Yolanda embraced her identity as a Southern Tech Eagle despite the fact that official university promotional materials reinforced the fact that Latinas/os are minorities at the university. When I asked, "Do you call yourself an Eagle?" She replied,

> Yolanda: Yes. I guess *because I am a part of this university*. *I am a student* and I would consider myself an Eagle. Like I go back home and I'm like oh, well I go to Southern Tech, like, well I'm a Eagle too. Like, we do, like, the whole Eagle Greeting and the hand signal kind of stuff and so I would say yeah… As much as, like, I would identify myself as an Eagle, I feel like I'm also Mexicana or Mexican American too, as much as I am an Eagle.

> DO: Do you think the majority of students picture you when they think about what an Eagle is?
>
> Yolanda: No. Because I know, like, for prospective students, like, the pamphlets that they give out, it's mostly like Anglo Americans, like Anglos and they have about one minority on there. *They might have one*.

Yolanda explains that while she understands that in prospective student pamphlets tend to reflect the inequalities in college, she knows she has every right to call herself an Eagle because she is a part of the university. In this way, her claiming the Eagle university identity is a form of a resistant identity.

At the same time, while respondents viewed themselves as full members, in spite of the racism and exclusion they face, there is significant cognitive and emotional labor in how students rationalize their membership in the university. For example, Brandi explains that she feels that the university at times welcomes students but at the same time, they do not value Latina/o students.

> I would think so, I mean if we weren't they wouldn't allow organizations that are for Hispanics- like, I guess they make us feel welcoming. If they really didn't appreciate us they wouldn't have those organizations, they wouldn't follow through with giving scholarships to some minorities, I know in some way they kind of have, but they do give a lot of scholarships to us and they accept a lot of us, um so in some ways I do think that they're accepting and value us.
>
> But, after all the events that have happened on campus, including the [university-wide] emails from [the President of the university], the multiple protests, the speech by a famous white supremacist, I have noticed that Latinos are not treated like an important part of Southern Tech, and that includes other minorities as well. We hear about "diversity" and "inclusion," but I have also read that we should treat "white leaders" of this campus with respect, I have heard "build that wall" from students on campus, I have gone to parties where people will dress like Trump and carry a sign that says "build that wall" on one side and "grab 'em by the pussy" on the other side, I read, heard, and I seen people standing up for their rights and wanting change at Southern Tech and people commenting that they should go back to their country if they don't like it here. At one point, I did feel that Latinos are treated as an important part, but *I don't anymore, and this is mostly due to plenty of people justifying these immoral*

> *actions and comments and stating that it is their freedom of speech regardless of how much it will affect students.* During this time, it is hard going to Southern Tech, it was hard being a part of the protests, and it is hard reading tweets and Facebook posts from students *that can care less if Latinos attend this campus or not.*

Brandi felt that Latinas/os could be valued at the university, but contrary evidence, including mass protests and social movements on campus, demonstrates to her that the university administration and majority of students could "care less" about the plights of Latina/o students. Even with all this, Brandi still sees herself as an Eagle. When I asked her if she thought that other students viewed her as an Eagle, she replied, "Do you think other students see you as an Eagle?"

> I mean not to be rude but-- I would hope so. But I mean if they don't, *I know I am.* I see myself as a true Eagle, I'm not a huge Bald Eagle but I think if people come to Southern Tech they come to get a degree or go to college anywhere to make the world a better place, you know, in any little way that they can, and I'm trying to come to this school like to say- um to be like you know "she came from Southern Tech, a good university and she's helping out in whatever way she can." So, if other people don't see that I'm a true Aggie, right now, which I don't see why I'm not like walking around "oh I hate Southern Tech, I wanted to go to U of S" but if they don't, I do. I see myself as a true Eagle, and I think that's what matters- and my family does to so that's more important. I mean I'm proud of where I come -- where I go to school. I really do take the whole "Leadership and Integrity" thing, um I honor it. I'll make fun of- like say it with my friends if they're lying about something and then we'll just bring up like "you're an Eagle -- Leadership and Integrity" and things like that. So yeah, I consider myself a true Eagle.

For Brandi, based on a reading of the university mission, she considered herself a Bald Eagle, possibly even more so than other students. At the same time, she is struck by the number of racist events that occur at the university. Even bearing in mind all the racism that Latinas/os face, she believes *she is earning her Eagle identity through her continued works*. In this situation, Latina/o college students often times find themselves having to

rationalize their membership in the university community, while at the same time working to claim and reframe the identity so that it may include them.

As a form of resistance, many Latina/o students also plainly rejected the university identity because they associated it with the negative racialized experiences they have had. For instance, Angel finds that he cannot see himself as a part of the university. In fact, he outright rejects the major identity that many students at Southern Tech embrace. For example, when I asked him if he felt that he was "blending in" at his university? He replied,

> Angel: Nah. I'm a "No-Co." Even then I don't like the traditions here. I'll go to a tailgate or I'll go to a game but uh it's with my Latino friends. So it's a Latino fraternity. Every activity that I do is always with Latinos. So, no. I think. No, I can't really say I'm blending. If that would've been true, I would have had like, white friends. I mean, I know white people, but I don't call them my friends. Every activity that I do has to do with Latinos…everything I try to make sure I'm part of anything that empowers us, um, but no, I mean I don't think I'm part of anything Southern Tech-related. I don't go to Midnight Vigil, I don't go to anything that's tradition-wise here. I'm a No-Co here, so…
>
> DO: What's a "No-Co?"
>
> Angel: It's basically like you don't follow the traditions…here at Southern Tech. If you're a No-Co, they look at you wrong. Cos, according to people, you come to A&M, you better love traditions, you know, you can't be here just for education. It has to be because of education *and* traditions. They talk shit like if you don't follow certain traditions. But I mean, I don't care, I came here for an education, and I aint come here 'cos of the …traditions! I aint even know the traditions. I got here and I didn't know shit.

Angel felt like he didn't know about the traditions, which as he notes, are an important component of feeling a part of the university. Of course, each university has its own traditions, symbols, culture, and identity. Angel continued to explain why he does not accept the university identity:

> Angel: White people probably look at a minority not following traditions and be like, what the f*ck are you doing here? They're giving you money and you're not following traditions?! You're a bad Eagle. That's my point of view. I might be wrong, but that's the way I look at it. They probably look at it where whoever is a minority who doesn't follow traditions, is ungrateful 'cos Southern Tech is paying for your stuff and yet you're still a No-Co? I guess that would be their logic.
>
> DO: What about minorities who do follow traditions?
>
> Angel: Yeah-yeah, there is. Most of my friends are "good Eagles" there is Latinos who are good Eagles. If you're a good Eagle you go to football games, you follow traditions. There are also those who are like myself who …I could care less about the traditions. I'm just trying to get my education and get out. I mean, I love Southern Tech, don't get me wrong, I mean I have adapted and I learned to love it. I rarely go back home now. But uhm, I don't know if it's just more that I've finally found a what you would call a niche that has made me like this place, which is my fraternity. Um, that's what has helped me… they helped me get through, even before I joined them, them dudes would always keep up with me. I think that's what I found, like a sub-group but not necessarily that I can identify myself with being an Eagle. *Because I'm not*. It's just that I found somebody else, that felt left out here and I guess we all got together …and we feel good now.

Angel cannot see himself as an "Eagle;" he does not identify with the university identity because of the deep-rooted sense of racialized nonbelonging that he has experienced at his university. However, he explains, it was his fraternity that assembled other students who also felt like outsiders. Importantly, through participation in his fraternity, he and those who feel like he does, is able to gain a sense of community and feel like he does belong.

Importantly, respondents were reacting to many elements of the university identity. The university identity is comprised of traditions, symbols, hand gestures, mascots, and even in the case of Southern Tech, terms for those who do not embrace the identity in all of its entirety. Those respondents who reacted to the university identity

with a resistant identity were able to interpret and fight for what they believed to be a solution to the problems that their university has in embracing Latinas/os.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how Latina/o students experience their university as a white racial place. I outline how their experiences with delegitimation, including experiencing hyper-visibility and hyper-invisibility, cause them to interpret their university experiences in negative ways. I find that Latina/o students are delegitimated when their place at the university, that is whether or not they are authentically deserving students, is drawn into question by white agents of the university. When Latina/o students interpret their experiences at the university, they begin to view the university as a racist institution. Included in this interpretation process are the identity conflicts that students undergo. At base, students must negotiate their experiences when they identify with their university, negatively impacting their integration into their college. I attribute this to the fact that they attend predominantly white universities with characteristics of a white racial place. I present the concept of the white racial place as a framework for understanding how students of color negotiate their college or university identity at predominantly white universities. Given that universities have unique identities, students must address the inequalities they experience to find ways to integrate into their campus and succeed academically.

To be clear, the delegitimation of Latina/o students should be interpreted as an academically discouraging processes. Among its negative effects, respondents' adoption of the university identity is hindered, negatively impacting their integration to campus,

as well as their attachment to campus. Overall, student wellbeing is also negatively affected, as respondents were required to expend energy and time negotiating the dynamics of racism in college.

Additional negative impacts of these experiences in college could be analyzed in a future study. For example, much research has shown that predominantly white networks provide significant advantages in job attainment. In this way, Latina/o students' long-term social capital could be negatively impacted. Future research could examine in depth how networks in college lead to job-attainment networks after college and how racial segregation in college may reproduce existing patterns in racial inequality with regards to social mobility through higher education.

# CHAPTER IV

# LATINAS/OS COUNTER-FRAMING FROM HOME CULTURES: STORIES OF SACRIFICE AND STRUGGLE AS EDUCATIONAL MOTIVATION

In this chapter, I examine the role of participation in Latina/o sororities and fraternities in the educational paths of their members. As I demonstrate in Chapter 2, Latina/o students experience significant individual and institutional racism that can discourage their academic persistence, requiring them to adapt to a hostile college environment in order to succeed academically. I demonstrate how Latina/o sororities and fraternities operate as comprehensive support groups for their members by validating their experiences and by reinforcing the sources of motivation that members have for pursuing higher education: their family and community.

I begin this chapter by examining how respondents almost uniformly cited their parents and family (kinship, more broadly) as their main reason for pursuing a college degree. Specifically, respondents cited the *sacrifices and struggles* experienced by their parents and family as a key motivation for their choice to continue their education. I then examine how because a majority of the respondents have had family members that have made unsuccessful attempts to obtain a post-secondary education, causing respondents to view their educational paths as the culmination of their family's and community's struggles – respondents viewed their role as a college student as their family and community's last hope for a better quality of life.

I argue that drawing on *narratives of sacrifice and struggle* serves as a form of *educational motivation* for students. In this way, respondents draw from their cultural experiences and backgrounds to advance their education. I conclude the chapter by examining how Latina/o sororities and fraternities provide support for members' educational persistence by validating student experiences and strengthening personal relationships with other university students. Importantly, this process enables members to support each other by providing mentorship and advice from relatable and trustworthy sources. Sorority and fraternity members provided advice that reinforced the family sacrifice and community struggle as educational motivation. I begin by reviewing relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding educational motivation among Latina/o students before reporting the results.

**Educational Motivation and Success among Latina/o Students: Towards A Critical Perspective**

Previous research on college persistence has built heavily on the work of Tinto's (1975; 1993; 2000) model of student integration wherein Tinto argues that students' social integration into a college environment is crucial for their college persistence and success. In this model, students first leave their home, then commit to their university and integrate into their college environment, leading to their persistence and graduation. Importantly, this perspective distinguishes between college retention, which focuses on an institutions ability to retain students through graduation, and examines the factors that influence students' decisions to persist or not persist in college.

Building on Tinto's framework of student integration, researchers have found that racial and ethnic identity to be an important resource for students of color as they transition into college (Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel 1991; Mayo, Murguia, and Padilla 1995; Orta, Murguia, and Cruz forthcoming). Ethnic identity, they find, is important for students' identity development and integration into campus, as well as their persistence in college.

Researchers employing a Systemic Racism framework have consistently examined how predominantly white colleges and universities remain fundamentally racist in their policies, practices, and outcomes (Moore 2008; Feagin, Imani, Vera 1996; Ortega Unpublished Dissertation; Sanchez Unpublished Dissertation). For example, Feagin and coauthors (1996) find that black students at predominantly white universities, similar to the three research sites in this study, continue to face significant overt and symbolic forms of racial discrimination that make their college experience a combative one. In her study of predominantly white Law Schools, Moore (2008) suggests that because whiteness is protected at every level, from racist student interactions up to colorblind discourse from the nearly all-white administration and faculty, the law schools themselves can be conceived of as white institutional spaces.

In this dissertation (Chapter 2), I outline how students experience profound forms of *racialized nonbelonging* that negatively affect their perception of themselves in the context of the institution, suggesting that these experiences are often tied to the identity and traditions of the university. This includes racist aggressions from white peers, staff, faculty, administrators, and even authorities outside of the university, such as police and

scholarship foundation administrators. In this way, predominantly white universities can be conceptualized as white racial places, distinguishing from previous conceptualization of spaces and focusing on the personal and social identities of students. In this context, Latina/o students face significant obstacles in obtaining a college diploma. Thus, it is no surprise that universities far and wide struggle with retaining Latina/o students and that conversely, Latina/o college students make decisions to not persist in higher education.

Moving away from Tinto's student integration model, other researchers have proposed that because Latina/o, and students of color more generally, continue to face negative "campus climates" that are unwelcoming, an alternative model is required (Yosso 2005; Yosso et al. 2009). Rejecting the dominant research perspectives that suggested that Latina/o students are less likely to complete college due to "cultural deficits" (i.e. that they do not value education, or lack the Cultural Capital to succeed in competitive college curriculums), Critical Race and LatCrit researchers suggest that the problem with student retention lies with educational institutions, not students. As a response, these researchers suggest that by analyzing for example the "Community Cultural Wealth" that enables Latina/o students to succeed in hostile college environments, we can better explain educational persistence and success among college students of color. Community Cultural Wealth is a concept that is developed by researchers that suggests that students of color bring with them "aspirations" (hopes and dreams) in the face of barriers. Another example would be the "familial capital" that students carry from their family and communities. This refers to the cultural and emotional lessons and support that students gain from their kinship (broadly conceived)

and communities. In effect, this community cultural wealth operates as an alternative to traditional Cultural Capital that is not valued by predominantly white institutions but that translates into productive educational outcomes for students of color. Indeed, the critical race in education framework represents a paradigm shift in education research that attempts to examine educational success among communities of color based primarily on their experiences and perspectives.

For some time, race scholars have analyzed how people of color draw from their culture and family to resist the pervasive nature of racial oppression in the U.S in general. Just as people of color are constantly negatively racially framed, people of color also have created responses to counter such framing of their group(s). Feagin (2010) describes how a *racial counter-frame* is just that, a perspective that rejects the premises of the dominant white racial frame. In effect, an expressed critique of systemic racism or of the white racial frame can potentially be viewed as a counter-frame. This includes when people of color draw on the culture they learn from, in the case of many Latinas/os, their origin or home culture. Feagin writes, "for all groups of color, the home-cultures can provide an important base for a quiet struggle against white cultural dominance and … for some to mount a more aggressive anti-racist counter-framing against white oppression" (p. 189). Within this context, students of color at predominantly white universities often develop counter-frames that critique their institution, but in other cases, simply to survive throughout their time in college. As Feagin explains, "although counter-frames were initially developed for survival, over the centuries many elements have been added that strengthen and enhance strategies of

everyday resistance" (p. 159). In this way, the home-culture frame, which draws from the learned family culture from the backgrounds of people of color, can provide the necessary emotional and cognitive motivation to persist in systemically racist institutions.

**Drawing on Home Cultures to Motivate and Persist in Higher Education**

Citing experiences with racist aggressions, racial exclusion, racialized nonbelonging, and the delegitimation of their campus membership, Latina/o college students in this study described having experience racial discrimination that permeated nearly all aspects of the social and academic spheres in university life. In the face of profound racial oppression, how do Latina/o students persist in their education? Respondents described a number of home-culture counter-frames that empowered them to continue their education in the face of racism.

Respondents' named their family and community as the primary motivation for their decision to persist in their education and described this a number of ways. First, consistent with previous research on "familial capital," respondents' parents often directly emphasized the importance of education, or taught values that the respondents applied to their educational pursuits. This process involved parents instilling in their children from young age the importance of gaining an education. Although respondents' parents often had limited knowledge of what is required to go to college, such as application procedures, financial aid forms, housing forms, etc., respondents internalized the great value that parents placed on education.

Distinguishing from previous research, respondents in this study identify their family members' sacrifices and ongoing struggles to achieve a quality of life as their motivation for continuing their education. Importantly, the fact that many had previously had family and community members attempt to continue their education with little success encouraged respondents in their decisions to persist in college. In this way, respondents interpreted their role as college students and the first in their family to attend college as a final hope for their family's socioeconomic security. Many respondents echoed phrases such as "I'm going to college for my family and community" as their primary motivation for continuing their education. These themes were also consistently found in respondents' discussion about sorority and fraternity involvement, suggesting that their organizations also played a role in supporting their educational persistence.

***Learning Education as a Value***

Vicente is a fourth-year student majoring in Technology Management. He was born in the U.S., his parents immigrated from Mexico and he is a member of the Gamma fraternity at Southern Tech. His father works in a factory and his mother works in food preparation at a restaurant. He cites his parents teaching him to treat his education as central to his life as a key motivation for his decision to pursue a higher education:

> Growing up I was a very studious type of person 'cos my parents always said that my job is school. And so if I was bringing A's to home on my report card, they wouldn't acknowledge the fact, it was more like *that was my job*, and we're not gonna reward you for just doing your job. And so that was my parents, so growing up I knew I was supposed to do that... it was the fact that my parents *me inculcaron* (instilled in me), "that's your job." They were like, "you have to go to school, *there's no other option."*

In Vicente's experience, his parents directly told him to place great value on his education, treating it much like a full-time job. The expectation that his parents set by suggesting that there was "no other option" is certain to have positively influenced Vicente's educational path.

Similarly, Brandi, a member of Rho Sorority in her third year at Southern Tech also recalls how her mother would always support her and her siblings in their high school extracurricular activities but would also set high expectations concerning all activities related to their education:

> My mom always pushed that, and um, she always, she always supported whatever we wanted to do no matter what, she was always the one taking us to practices and our games because we got out late and had to be there in the early mornings - she never told us no - she said if we really want to do something just go for it, but we had to prove to her that we want to do it.

By working hard at her schoolwork and proving to her mom her dedication to her extracurricular activities, Brandi became more involved in her school which likely had a positive impact on her grades and overall dedication to school-related activities.

Just like Brandi, many respondents recalled moments from their upbringing that they interpreted as having influenced their drive to graduate from college as well as the work ethic they apply to their schoolwork. For example, during a group lunch, members of the Phi Fraternity at Midwest Public University, Diego and Joe explained:

> Joe: I have to work for it first. (Repeats) *I have to work for it first.* That's one thing that my dad always brought up. If you want something, you have to work for it. Nothing is free. And I feel like I've talked to a lot of white kids here, like in classes I take with them, and I always ask them, how did you get this, how did you get that. Oh, "my parents bought it for me, I just asked them for it, and they got it for me." And I'm like, oh, "that's nice," you know. And I'm like, when I try to ask my parents for something, they're like, "what is it for, why do you need it," and they're like okay, "before I give it to you, you have to come do this first,"

> and I'm like, okay, that's fine. And that's something that I feel like, it gives me a greater sense of discipline.
>
> Diego: Yeah (agreeing with Joe) and I appreciate everything that my Dad does for me. During High School, I would always work for him on the weekends, or during breaks or whatever. And I appreciate it. And my Dad is a hardass on everything. But at the end of the day, I appreciate the hardass he was on me because it develops character. To me, I think I developed character from it and a good work ethic. I have come to the conclusion, that if I really want something, I have to work for it, nothing is free. *That's why I bust my ass here at this university -- 'Cos I am working towards a degree. 'Cos I know in the end its all gonna be worth it.*

Joe and Diego took the lessons about hard work and "earning your way" that they gained from their parents and applied them to their academic endeavors. For Joe, his parents' strictness when it came to getting daily necessities translated into a sense of self-discipline for himself and similarly, Diego relates his experience in working with his father and his father's strictness as having forged his character, propelling him to work harder at school.

In addition to learned values that they would later apply to their education, respondents also learned to value education by short narratives that their parents shared with them. Agustin, a third-year community development major at SSU believes his parents support his decision to go to college and that they showed it when they went through great lengths to ensure that he enrolled at Southwestern State University. He explained:

> When I was going through the admissions process, I remember that I almost, I had told my parents that I didn't wanted to come to college because I didn't have the financial aid to come here and, I always remember my dad, he said, *dinero o no, tu vas a ir al colegio por que es lo que nosotros venimos aquí a Estados Unidos hacer, lo que yo, yo hice el sacrificio para estar aquí, para traerlos para aqui para que tu o tus hermanos fueran al colegio*, (money or not, you are going to college because that's why we came to the United States and that's why I

> made the sacrifice of being here so that you and your siblings could go to college) and I feel like that stuck to me a lot and actually, my dad had to take out a loan for me to be here in college, you know, and not have to be taking out the loans myself. That stuck with me. I know my dad was going through a financial crisis. We had a bankruptcy, my parents went through a bankruptcy, so we were close to losing our home. We were just close to losing everything and for him to, to take that, that toll of taking out a loan in order for me to come to college and made me feel like the supported me, you know, and ever since they knew I had the chance to come to college they just kept telling me, like, "you're going to go to college and we're going to support you. We might not know what's going on, but we know that we're going to support you in anything that you need for you to be in college." So everyday just letting me know that, you know, we're going to make it through whether we have money or not. And that always stuck to me.

For Agustin, being in college was viewed as a long-term investment by his parents. For his father, it's one of the main reasons they immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico. His family went to such great lengths to instill in him the value of education especially at a time when it seemed impossible for Agustin. In this way, Agustin learned to value education through the brief narrative that his father shared with him that day. As his father's story demonstrates, direct motivational support in their education did not end in high school or the application process for respondents. Often times, during college, respondents counted on their parents for continued emotional support. For example, as Marisol, a member of the Alpha Sorority at Midwest Public University explained:

> Marisol: they've been there, but when it comes to schoolwork and paperwork, financial aid, like, loans, like, my parents are like, clueless.
>
> DO: How *have* they been able to be supportive?
>
> Marisol: It's been financially… more emotionally, you know, when I'm breaking down or I'm really stressed, like, they're the ones who are actually there to help me out and just remind me, like, "look you're almost done." Or I'm like, you know what, I should just go home and help out my family, work. Uhm, they are the one's who are like, "you know, stick to it, continue, you're almost done." So I would say that they've been my biggest support versus anyone else."

In this way, Marisol saw her parents being there for her when she was stressed out about classwork as a central source of support by reminding her of the value of education. In her case, even into college, the fact that her family support her in her education financially as well as emotionally when she wants to quit, continues to promote the high value of an education. Respondents generally learned and were reminded of the importance of higher education beginning from a very young age and well into their college careers.

***Honoring Family Sacrifice and Struggle Through Our Education***

On a September afternoon, I made plans to meet with Oscar at an near-campus taco place that he and his friends frequent. There I met Arturo, a first-year student at SSU who is being recruited to join the Phi Fraternity. As the three of us ate lunch, it struck me how quickly Arturo opened up about himself to me being that it was the first time we'd met. I quickly learned that he is from a small town on the U.S.-Mexico border. He told me that he learned about the Phi fraternity from his *camarada* (friend) from his hometown, Enrique, who had just joined new member at a different university. Arturo talked about how his first semester is challenging but he's going to continue working on improving his GPA. He said,

> I have no excuse. My parents *se sacrificaron* (sacrificed themselves) by working long hours and hard jobs in order for me to come to college. Sometimes I get down on myself and I think about quitting, and then I look at my father and mother's job and think, "now that's a hard job." Yeah, *classes and stuff can be hard but their jobs are harder.* I have no excuse to quit. If I need money, my dad says, *alli esta, agarra lo que necesites* (there it is, get take you need). They work so I can do better." He continued, "I have to keep going and work hard because I have no excuse. *Seguro,* I could quit at any time and make good money at my father's job, at $14-15.00 an hour, which is good, *pero* I need to keep going 'cos they are counting on me.

The brief exchange above summarizes the typical narrative that explains respondents' motivation and their determination to graduate from college. Arturo views his parents' immigrant story of struggle, their desire to progress in life, and their willingness to undergo hardships as a form of self-sacrifice that ultimately benefits him. He feels that it is his burden to face head-on the challenges of higher education that are common for low-income, first-generation students of color. Importantly, he also views his educational goals primarily as a responsibility to his family and not a means of personal individual gain. This rationale is at the core of what motivated nearly all respondents in their decision to persist in their education and to complete their goal of graduating from college.

While learning to place a very high value on education demonstrates how the family becomes a major source of support in respondents' educational persistence, how respondents interpreted the adversities experienced by their family (sacrifices and struggles) as a major source of motivation drove many of the respondents to persist in their academic goals. For example, when I asked Guadalupe about what her biggest motivation in college was, she said,

> My biggest motivation is probably my parents. Uhm, we don't always have the best relationship, but I know *they, they sacrificed a lot for not only me, but my sisters, um, um, my grandparents, and everything*. Because, um, my parents, my mom comes from a family of fourteen kids and my dad comes of, from a family of nine and, um, all of my mom's siblings, they're all in Mexico and, um, my dad's siblings, they're here, but, um, they're like either, like, drug addicts or alcoholics and my dad and one his brothers are the only ones that aren't like that at all. Uhm, and so, uhm, my parents have done that a lot to, because they're, like, kind of the backbone of their families, like, they're the ones that, like, support their siblings and their parents and, uhm, I know that takes a toll on them and so that's my biggest motivation and so that way, like, when they are older, because they, like, they are already old now and they're getting sicker and, you

> know, they're going to need some help ... So, kind of, like, paying them back for their work.

Guadalupe has seen first-hand the hardships that her parents have gone through for the sake of their families. She shares how her parents have made sacrifices that were meant to benefit her family, including her grandparents, aunts, and uncles. When she observes that those sacrifices have taken a physical and emotional toll on them, she feels compelled *to honor their sacrifices by graduating from college.*

Respondents frequently described their family hardships as "sacrifice" and "struggle" when they linked their educational motivations to their family. Ramiro, a fourth-year student at SSU and member of Phi Fraternity, shared the following story to show how the struggle that his parents have informed his life trajectory, including the decision to go away to college at SSU and to pursue higher education. When I asked Ramiro how he came to be at SSU, he described how although he was a high achieving student, college wasn't always a part of his plan. He had gotten in with a bad crowd and began using drugs early on in High School. After a run in with police, his mindset changed. When I asked him what exactly changed his mindset, he replied,

> One of the things that I always reflect on is, you know, like *the struggle that my mom faced*. I know my dad faced struggles, but my mom faces them like a lot worse because, you know, I mean my mom is mentally strong, but you know she has a much darker past and part of it is you know like the fact that you know like they did cross over undocumented and, I'll never forget this and this kind of like the reason why for everything, you know. Um, I remember I was six at the time and we had just gone to Mexico, coming back and you know like my dad and I, well we were citizens and you know we crossed the border like nothing and we were just waiting like in a motel room at the time my dad is like, "oh you know they went to the store, they went to the store," and so like well you know like "damn, they're taking like five hours just to get to the store, you know, like where are they?" And so, then it wasn't until later that you know they finally came around. And it's like as I'm older, I realized what happened, you know,

> they needed to get a coyote (smuggler), you know to pass them through. You know, like my mom doesn't like to talk about it, but you could just see it on her face. I remember … her face very clearly that day. I don't know why, but it's just something that I will never forget and so, you know, like, this ties back to everything that we talked about...

The intense experience of waiting for his mother to cross the U.S.-Mexico Border without documentation and the look on her face that followed was especially traumatic for Ramiro. Although he was very young, he clearly remembers the hardships that his parents and especially his mother underwent in travelling to the U.S. This in turn, motivated his decision to persist academically and it is something that continues to orient his academic decisions. By drawing on this experience and the experiences of struggle that his parents went through, he is able to create a narrative that gives him the strength to encourage his educational pursuits.

Although many respondents shared a story about how their parent's migration and associated sacrifices motivated their decision to pursue higher education, many also shared stories about how their parent's struggle to achieve a higher quality of life have influenced their perspectives in general. These respondents viewed their parents struggles to provide for their family as inspiring their own goals. Andres, a fifth-year student at SSU describes his mother's struggle to attend college while still contributing to her household financially:

> Andres: looking back at, at my parents and seeing, especially mom, seeing the struggle that, that she went through, you know, to, to learn English and the fact that her parents didn't make much money. Another thing about my mom, she, um, she worked all throughout high school, so I think she got her first job when she was, like, 14 or 15. She, she was working at a grocery store and going to high school at the same time and then when she got into college, she, she had no social life at all. She was literally, go to school and then go to work and do it all, then do homework. And then the next day, do it all over again through college.

> And my first two years in college, I didn't even have a job. I was just going to class and that's it, you know. So, seeing that and, and seeing, hearing about the struggles that she had to go through, I would, I would always think back, like, you know what, I could be in a worse situation than I am now. Like, yeah, I don't, I'm, I don't know what I want to do, as of right now, but at the end of the say I'm still here at SSU. It's not like I've been kicked out, so that, looking back at my mom and seeing, seeing her story. Um, *but that definitely is motivation for me, wanting to keep going.*
>
> DO: Yeah.
>
> Andres: Because I always look back and I'm like I could be in a worse situation, but I'm not. So, I would definitely say that that's a big factor in me continuing because I mean, you're right, I could've. I could've quit. That, I feel like there's been times in my, in my life where I could've easily just said, you know what, this isn't going the way I want to go, like, and just quit. But I always have that in the back of my mind, seeing what she went through. So, I was like, you know what, like, um, no matter how long it takes me, as long as I get through, like, I should be good. [DO: Inspires you?] Yeah, yeah. As cliché as that might sound sometimes, you know, some people are like oh yeah, my parents were this, my parents were, but, but really, yeah. I definitely would say, my mom especially, just seeing everything that she went through. I think even through when she was in, um, college, her dad got laid off, too, so, and her mom didn't work, so literally her parents had no income and the fact that she was still going through college and, and paying, supporting her family by working. I was like I don't think, I don't know if I'd be able to do that, you know? … It's, I don't know, it's pretty powerful.

Andres has taken to heart all the hardships that his mother endured to complete a college degree and to eventually become a middle school teacher. He thinks his mother has set a high bar in terms of how much adversity he can take before quitting school.

Tanya is a third-year at STU majoring in education. After I asked her about the difficulties of being a Latina woman at STU, she explained what motivated her to graduate from college and become independent:

> Tanya: I have no problem with women staying at home, my sister she dropped out of
> school, went to cosmetology school and she's like, "I just want to be a stay at home house mom," actually, she doesn't even want to be a mom, she wants to be

> a stay at home house wife, she doesn't want to work. And that, at the beginning that drove me insane because like *my mom did not raise us like this.* My mom raised my sister and I completely on her own for several years. And I think my sister was too young to remember at that point, but yeah she did. *She raised us completely on her own for several years.* And for her to be like, "I don't want to work, I want someone to support me," ugh. I got so mad at her, I started yelling at her. I felt really bad after wards because my sister is not me…
>
> DO: How is she different?
>
> Tanya: I think the times we grew up were very different. I saw how my mom get hurt, I saw her struggle, I saw her fight with my dad, and I saw her get remarried... Um, my sister will probably mostly remember just my stepdad…But my stepdad is her role model. Um, so, when we met with my stepdad we were a lot more stable, we were going to church more often, we were… stereotypically stable. Um, so she doesn't really understand, *she hasn't seen struggle like I have.* So she's okay with being supported and taken care of. I am not okay with it…"

Tanya hopes to become financially independent and views college as the way to achieve that goal. Having witnessed the difficulties with her mother raising two children on her own as a result of separating from her husband, Tanya views the struggles her mother faced as a life lesson. In this way, Tanya interprets her mother's financial and personal relationship struggles as a valuable resource that positively influence her perspective in life and her educational goals. Having witnessed the adversity that her mother experienced helps motivate her in her decision to graduate from college.

Respondents uniformly drew strength from the adversities their parents faced. For example, Dolores feels the pain that her parents feel all the time being undocumented and living in the U.S. She draws strength from their struggle to push herself forward. She has accomplished quite a bit, she is the president of the Nu Sorority chapter at SSU, has a number of academic scholarships, and is involved in other organizations in addition to her sorority. She talked at length about her admiration for

her parents and how her father has worked hard to turn his life around and how her parents have played a supporting role in their families:

> Dolores: So I ask my parents about their lives… they don't necessarily, they don't cry to me, or they don't tell me that they regret [immigrating to the U.S.], because they don't regret doing it. But, like, I don't know. I guess *I feel the pain that they felt* when they're talking to me about it. You know, like, the fact that they had to leave their parents, they had to leave their siblings when they were 15… (Pauses) Um, so my Dad … moved to Houston and he was a 15-16 year old guy by himself, like, undocumented just going to wherever he could find work. Um, he has told me that, like, um, back where he lived, like with the, it was a group of them, group of guys, it was a really small house and they would wake up super early, go to work all day, come home and, like, he fell into, like, the cycle of, like, drugs and whatnot. I guess to kind of, like, forget that he was going through, like, not being with his family, living, like, a crappy life, you know, here, having to work insane hours for little pay. I guess he started, he fell into that because he wanted to, like, ease the pain, you know, a little bit… And to me that's insane. Like him having to make the decision at 16 years old to leave his family, to travel, like, across to another country, to try and make a living here in some way, to falling into, like, a vicious cycle, to finding my mom, to being, like, the man that I most admire today. Like that just to me is insane. That his life has been full of pain and strength at the same time. Just knowing that they had to go through all of that just to get to where they are right now, which is not even where they want to be.
>
> Me: So the stories that they've told you, do you think they've impact how you see yourself in any way?
>
> Dolores: I think they do… I feel like everything that I do is for them, you know, because I owe them everything that I have and everything that I am. Um, I guess *I sort of see myself as the person who's going to finally get them to where they've always dreamed of getting* … Um, and although they may be things like a new house or getting my dad a new truck or a new horse or whatever, even if it is those things that, like, are material things, like, I feel like I have to since they've carried me on their backs for so long, like, *it's my turn to carry them on my back and finish what they started* … That's how I see myself and that's what I think about when I'm just like, oh, like, I can't do this anymore. I'm like, "No. I can't go home. What am I going to do back home? *What is all that they've done going to be for, you know? If I'm not here."*

Acknowledging their sacrifices, in addition to the adversities they continue to face, Dolores draws strength from her parents' stories. She draws strength from their ability to

continue to persevere in the face of adversity. Importantly, she views her own place in the story as also central. Her place is a continuation of the struggle her parents set out when they left their homes at 15. In this way, Dolores does not separate herself from her parents struggles, in fact, because they started out when they immigrated with the goal of improving their family's wellbeing, she sees her role as another contributor to advancing her family and parents' goals.

Similarly, Joe recalls his parents' stories and how they've worked hard all their lives to achieve a modest living. He describes the daily struggle they undergo in addition to the long journey that his parents and his father especially have taken to get to where they are. He relates these struggles to his educational experiences:

> I was young when my dad was the only one working. And money was tight. He put food on the table... as a shipping and receiving supervisor. And now he drives an hour, in the morning or when he comes back from work. He makes about, I wanna say 39,000 a year. And that took him 22 years to make that money right there. At least 30 years now that he's moved up in the ranks. And my mom is a community center coordinator now, which is like after school program. And she makes about 35,000. So altogether, they make like 70k, rough estimate. And that's how they're putting me through college. They both work, they're working for me to be here. I see how hard my dad works. And I can tell it's taken a toll on him already. He's like 52 and I can see him aging already… But I see what working does to them; and they work really hard. And that just has an influence on me…. I am really hard on myself this semester because I kinda skated last semester. And now, I'm like, I can't be messing up, this is too much money going to waste. And this isn't me. So, I am hard on myself. And that's how I relate to it. My parents work hard, so why can't I work hard. If I'm up all night, my dad is just getting up to work at five o' clock in the morning to be there at six. So, he has to get ready at four, leave the house by 4:45. And then with traffic and everything, he gets there roughly at 5:45, 5:50, just to make it on time. *And if he can do that, there's no reason why my grades should be messed up if I'm just focused on school and in school.* So, *they work really hard and it's just passed down to us.*

Joe gains inspiration from his parents' hard work ethic. His father's daily schedule and modest pay serve as motivation for Joe to apply himself and work long hours when it comes to his study habits. In fact, we can see the direct influence of Joe's parents' work ethic and hardships on his own outlook about his education.

Under seemingly different circumstances, for example, from having college-educated parents, one may expect different sources of motivation. I have found that this is not the case for respondents. For example, Valeria's parents went to college in Puerto Rico, but she describes the hardships they underwent to graduate from college only to find that their degrees are not valued in the U.S.

> Valeria: Yeah, they both went to college in Puerto Rico ... and they were like the only ones to go. My mom - she was like the second one because her older sister went, but my mom was the first one to *graduate* college and then my dad's the only one from his family to go to college. Like my dad, he grew up basically poor. Like poor in Puerto Rico. So it was like difficult 'cos he only had like sometimes twenty dollars a week for him to eat …and there were times that he couldn't come home because of it. And then my mom - my mom went to college even though she had my older brother at seventeen… And that made it difficult cause she had to go to school. Uh, she was a full-time student and she was full-time working. So, they both, and they both didn't have cars so they would have to hitch a ride home. She still went to school.
>
> DO: Does that influence your perspective at all?
>
> Valeria: Yeah, it makes me like work harder to make them proud. Cause then some of my dad's family - my grandma - has like the hope that I finish college just like him 'cos I'm like the only girl in that side, and so she hopes that I finish college. And I really want to make him proud to because he's been the caretaker of his family … so *I want to be that person to take care of him and also to my mom*… especially my mom 'cos she had me at seventeen like she tells me that she was valedictorian at her high school but they didn't let her walk because she was pregnant… So, she was like "I want you to work hard" and she was always like "I want you to do stuff in college I never did." She's like, "I never want you to go hungry in college…*I never want you to go through the rough experience I had*…" and so eventually *I just want to give it back to them*.

Valeria's parents encountered significant challenges in continuing their education, which drives Valeria to pursue her education and eventually "give it back" and have her parents reap the benefits of her college diploma. Importantly, just as Dolores' experience above, who's parents have little formal education and immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, Valeria sees herself as an extension of her parents and of their struggle.

Respondents generally viewed their own struggle to achieve academically and to remain on the path toward college graduation as a continuation of their parents sacrifices and struggles. In this way, they are honoring the dreams of their parents for their children to live a better life. Respondents interpreted their parents sacrifices and struggles as sources of strength in their own academically-related hardships, which provided them with the motivation to persist in college.

***My Family Needs Me to Finish College Because They Couldn't***

A predominant theme among respondents' educational motivation is that they viewed themselves as bearing the burden of accomplishing what has eluded their family for some time: graduating from college. Respondents described how the fact that their family had at one point attempted to attend college but had not been able to graduate, and I suggest that this played an important role in their decision to persist in their education. It is noteworthy that while 40% of the respondents were the first in their family and extended family to attend college, an additional 29% had a family member(s) that began college but did not complete the degree. Only 17% of respondents had at least one parent that had completed college. Appendix F includes a table providing a detailed distribution of family educational background of respondents. Indeed, for a majority of

their parents and family, that the respondents were on-track to graduate from college was a dream come true. At the same time, by attending college, respondents also saw themselves as accomplishing what their community is unable to do because of systemic barriers for Latinas/os in education. This community-orientation served as a major source of motivation for respondents. Altogether, respondents view being able to attend college after knowing that so many from their community and family have wished to be there as a significant responsibility and, in some cases, a burden.

Uriel, a fourth-year education major described how what it was like for him when he made the move from Chicago into his dorm at Midwest Public University as an important moment for his family as well as for his own educational goals.

> Uriel: (laughs) I brought my entire family. I brought my sister, my brother, my *primos* (cousins) – like a little Kindergarten. They brought like two vans, my grandpa's huge van, and then my dad's Astro van, so it was like, I came here with them and took them upstairs… little ass dorm. I was in a program… so they dropped me off right, and they had to wait, right, because I had to go deal with the program for orientation and so like the rest of the day they waited, all of my family waited for me in that little dorm room, for me to finish the program. Like four or five cousins, my two brothers, my sister, my dad, my mom, my two aunts, and my other aunt and her boyfriend, and it was… they had set up my room by the time I got back. It was really cool. And they were like, "Damn, your room is really small." I was like, I'm pretty sure I'm not gonna be being here all the time… probably go to the library, they didn't understand that, but they saw it and they were really happy. It was very sad, emotional when they left because they got on the elevator and I could already see my little sister tearing up and my little brother started tearing up, and I was like, "why you crying?!"
>
> DO: How old were they at that point?
>
> Uriel: Young. They're on their way to high school [now]... But it was very… emotional. My mom started crying. My dad didn't cry. You know how Mexican fathers are, he didn't cry. He cried on the way back, my mom told me, he cried on the express way on the highway back home, that he was actually was crying. I was like wow. I never saw that, so, you know. Because my mom was crying, all these people crying, my aunts were in the van crying. Yeah, but basically, I

> brought a whole Kindergarten with me here and I felt like it was a good thing to bring them because now *I'm hoping they go to college*, you know?"

For Uriel, his family's well-being and his educational persistence are closely tied together. He saw it as important to bring his entire family with him when he moved away for college. The story he tells describes how his family was integral to his beginning his academic career. At the core of his story, the fact that his entire family was there for his move to college reinforces his hopes for his family for social mobility through education. As the first in his family to attend college, he represents the hopes and aspirations of his entire family.

Adriana, a member of the Omicron Sorority in her third year at Midwest Public University, describes how they were unable to attend college but also how her parents constantly reminded her of the importance of education:

> My mom -- both of my parents -- always really drilled into me the importance of education and what they sacrificed. They're both the oldest in their families. My mom is the oldest of seven. And my dad is the oldest of fifteen. *They both wanted to continue their education, but couldn't because they had to help support their siblings*. So, uh they both really emphasized like my need- like you know, you go do what you want to do, and you'll figure it out. So, I took advantage of my high school education, I was very involved, I was the school president, I was also salutatorian…

Importantly, Adriana notes how her parents emphasized the importance of education especially given their experience of being unable to continue their own education. In this way, Adriana is continuing her education, in part, because her parents were unable to do so. Her parents even had such an impact that she became a stellar student, including being involved in college preparatory programs. Adriana's story is representative of the respondents in this study in that many interpreted their family's educational history as a reason for them to stay in school, and in Adriana's case, to excel to the highest ranks.

For example, Sebastian recalls how his mother had a chance to go to a technical college but was unable to go, "I was the first one in my family to graduate from high school and, like, I really see how much they, they struggle. My mom, she had potential to, like, go to, go to a technical school. Um, *pero* she ended up getting pregnant and my dad, he didn't, he didn't even finish middle school." In this instance, Sebastian knew that his mother missed a chance at obtaining a postsecondary degree and relates it to the current economic hardships his family continues to face.

In another example, Brandi gives a clear explanation about her mother's insistence on academic excellence and her mother instilling the value of education in her and her siblings. She details how she came to the realization of why her mother impressed upon her the importance of higher education:

> My mom she was a sales associate or assistant manager for as long as I can remember for different stores like bebe, Nine West, Maternity Parenthood, and then she just recently got a new job for an insurance company so that's very different because I know how much she hated working in retail, but *she had to do what she had to do in order to provide for us*, and then she finally has this job and then hopefully - *she's planning on going back to school*, that's her biggest goal. And um recently my grandmother explained to me that when [my mom] was pregnant with me - 'cos she had me at seventeen - they offered my mom for her to go to school again, and she didn't want to take it, and I asked my grandmother like, "is that why she has always pushed us to go to school, since we were like three years old?" And she said, "yeah, that's why."

Importantly, whereas in traditional American terms a family unit includes only ones parents and siblings, for respondents in this study, family referred to extended kinship, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews. This is how respondents referred to their whole family and respondents often referred to their *whole*

families as having influenced their decision to go to college. When I asked if he was a first-generation student, Angel clarified,

> Well, I'm - my family as in my dad and my mom I have a little brother - but my whole family, as in my whole family, *they have tried to go to college but they don't last.* They go for one year and then get out. There was like three before me that wanted to go to college but they got out like after the first year. Cousins. So, I'm the first one that has stayed and that you know, got scholarships as well…

Angel, now a member of the Gamma Fraternity and third-year at STU was the first in his whole family to persist in college, but he clearly was not the first to *try* to go to college. Similarly, Ivana, a member of Rho Sorority at STU shared a particularly poignant story about her childhood that made a huge impact on her academic trajectory:

> I know, like, growing up I used to say, like, I wanted to be a doctor, that kind of thing. My mom was like "oh, yeah, Mari. You can go be a doctor if you want to. You can do whatever you want." And then, like, I guess getting into high school I started focusing more on school and getting good grades and stuff just so, I could, um, be able to go to college and apply and stuff. Because obviously, like, you need good grades. I started joining, like, all the academic clubs in high school, like student council, that kind of stuff. Just so like I could meet like the qualifications, requirements and like *ya* once getting to high school, like, my mom especially then, like, she would be like, "Yeah, go to school. Work hard so you can go to college so you don't have to be a stay at home mom and have to, like, depend on your husband like, like sometimes I feel like with your dad I have to worry for him to give me money just to be able to go out and, like, buy stuff. I don't want you to be like me, have to depend on someone and just have to, like, just depend on them. Go to school. Get your career. Be independent and just do that for yourself." I was like yeah, I hope, I told her, like yeah mom, "*si, le voy a echar muchas ganas, me quiero mejorar no solamente para mi, like for you, mainly*" because, she had it rough too with my dad because he used to be a alcoholic. So, she had it rough, and, like, she never left him because he, she didn't want us to have to have a stepfather kind of thing. She stayed with my dad to make sure that me and my siblings had the best life possible that we could have. She's like "I don't want that for you", like "*I want you to go to school. I don't want you to go through what I did*."

Ivana's mother was not able to go to college and she wanted Ivana to be independent and to have a chance at a more independent life than she has had. Ultimately, respondents

viewed their being in college as fulfilling much of the dreams of their parents and family. As the following discussion with Diego and Joe demonstrates, the fact that so many previous family members have been unable to complete a college degree places even greater pressure on them to do what has eluded their family members.

> Diego: Out of all us… My sister, she didn't get a degree from a university. *She did go, but she ended up dropping out*. My brother, he's special education, he's mentally disabled. I mean it's not really bad, but when you talk to him, you can actually tell he is. So, of course, he's not gonna get a degree. And they're kinda lax on him to get a degree, and out of us three it's up to me to get a degree. So, I can relate. My sister she is working two jobs and you know it's just not working out for her. That's just the situation.
>
> DO: As the firsts in your family to go to college, do you see it as a burden?
>
> Joe: I mean not as a burden, but as like, yeah. I have to set the standard. *My brothers didn't really set the standard for me.* So, I feel like *I have to set the standard for my sister*. I'm doing my best here, and I'm trying to do my best, so hopefully, I graduate. So that hopefully she pursues the track that I'm in, and goes for a degree in something, or do something with her life other than just go to work after high school. Or follow in the steps of her cousins. Most of my cousins from my dad's side of the family, which are females, they usually by her age, already have a kid or get pregnant or something. She hasn't gone down that path yet, but hopefully she doesn't end up down that path.
>
> Diego: Yeah, so, it's not a burden, but that, I'm like the last hope. It's like pressure. And I don't want to let them down. The heat is on."

As Diego and Joe explain in the conversation above, they hope to be the first in their family to graduate from college, both mention how their older siblings have not been able to attend or complete college. Importantly, they both place great importance on the fact that they are in college. In fact, they say that they feel significant pressure to set a higher "standard" for the younger members of their family so that they might go to college as well. As a consequence, the pressure to do what many before them have attempted plays a major role in motivating their educational goals.

At the same time, even when families may not be directly clearly supportive of educational persistence, respondents interpreted their family's financially needy circumstances as another reason they need to finish college to help their family. For example, when I ask Sebastian how his family perceived his attending college, he replied:

> Sebastian: They're indifferent. Like, um, whether I stay or drop out tomorrow, they're fine with it. Like they don't tell me to go home, but they don't tell me that I need to stay here. It's kind of like they're okay with whatever I choose, which is kind of a burden por que, I, … um, so *I push myself* since nobody's really pushing me. So, like, sometimes I feel like do I really *need* school? But then I'm like nah, like I'm almost done, just, like, a couple more semesters and you're done. So. I know, like, the first semester here the whole culture shock and being lonely, like that hits you pretty hard, um, first time away from the family, you're kind of forced to be independent. And like my first semester here I had a dorm, um, to myself so, like, a whole dorm for two people, I had it for myself! *Pero* it gets lonely. So, like, I was telling them that, and they said "*pues,* if you want, we can pick you up." I'm like, "no, I'm not -- that's not the point, like I'm here, I got to make it," and they're like "*pues,* if you ever want to come home, that's fine by us."
>
> DO: As in come home permanently?
>
> Sebastian: Yeah. So, that, that was always an option, *pero* it's not. They're, I know, like, they struggle (financially) back home, so sometimes I think, I'm like, "I'm wasting my time here. I could be home helping them," but then I'm like no, like, um, "I may be wasting time *pero it's going to benefit me later on and benefit them. It's, like, just a couple hardships right now will go a long way later." So, I, I keep pushing myself.*

Just like for Sebastian, many respondents' personal motivation to persist in college is derived from their family and his desire to improve the quality of life of his family. Importantly, the fact that they were unable to achieve the dream of post-secondary education that would potentially open more opportunities for socioeconomic mobility is a common thread among members. This background and associated experience has the

effect of further motivating respondents to persist academically. However, as the next section demonstrates, this is not limited to direct familial ties, rather, respondents are also compelled to continue their education because they feel that their community also needs them to go to college.

***My Community Needs Me to go to College Because They Couldn't / Can't***

A common theme among respondents educational narratives was that they felt that their community needed them to go to college. As discussed in this dissertation (Chapter 2), respondents demonstrated an acute awareness of the white racial framing of Latinos, and in many ways, when combined with an understanding of the systemic racism that they have faced, this sensitizes them to the needs of their community. Ana, a sophomore transfer student to U of S and a member of the Nu Sorority best describes how she feels that her family *and* her community need her to finish college. She says,

> Ana: I have to go to school for my family. I have to go to school for my community, you know. I'm not going to school 'cos someone said, "Ana, go to school." It's not just because I wanted to. I didn't have to come to college if I didn't want to, but I did. I felt there was an expectation for me, not an expectation. But like, I had to I had to for my family, I had to for my nephews and nieces, for my community to show people like "hey, you're a Latina, and you don't have to be the richest person to go to college. Anyone can go to college, it doesn't matter where you're from."
>
> DO: So, you saw it more as a responsibility to your family…?
>
> Ana: (Interrupts) Yeah, and my parents will always tell me, "don't feel like you have to go to college" but *aah* (sighs, voice shakes) *I can't help but feel like that*. '*Cos like I said my brother and my sister, school didn't work out for them*. My sister has four kids and uh they're like, three of them, their biological father, like his family, as far as I could tell, there really wasn't a good influence them, any of them. They were all like these "thug life" peoples. And so they had no one to look to for like, like, the question "why should I stay in school?" I always felt like I need to be the one that needs to show my nephews they can go to school for whatever they want. You know, it doesn't matter what you've been through.

> You know, if you want to go school, any school, *I'll support you.* Like I said my sister didn't go to school, so she has no room to say, "hey, go to school," 'cos then they'd be like, "well, you didn't go to school." Well, then they look at me, and I'm like, "no, you have to go to school 'cos I went to school." And definitely too just learning the statistics and like *Latino students* are more in the lower end of enrolling in college, and it's changing now, but even then, it's still on the lower end of Latino students who enroll in a post-secondary education, whether it be community college, technical school, or college-college. So yeah, *I do feel a responsibility to be in college, and do well, and prove to the world,* you can be Latina, you can be rich or poor, you can be from this part of town or that part of town, and you can still go to school."

Ana describes how she feels a responsibility to "set the standard" for her family just as other respondents have stated. However, she also describes how she feels a responsibility to her community. She feels that her being in college can also change the dynamics of systemic inequality in education. Respondents were clearly aware of the prevalence of systemic racism and the white racial framing of their group. Diego and Joe related it this way in our conversation:

> Joe: You can try empower [youth] to do better, you know. 'Cos as Latinos, you're kinda set up to fail in a sense. Just from the fact…
>
> Diego: That's what's expected of you.
>
> Joe: Yeah, you're set up to fail, that's what's expected of you from all the stereotypes.
>
> Diego: Well, if you're Latino, it depends where you come from…

They clarify that Latinos from their neighborhoods, from their community, especially are expected to fail based on how they are stereotyped. In a later conversation, Diego would clarify, "I'm a Latino from Chicago. And I relate to other Latinos the extent that we are a product of our environment. I grew up four blocks away from Kaiser Park, where it was just gangs, it was a hot spot, it was dangerous at that park. You know. The Latinos there

go through a lot of struggles." In this way, Diego, like many respondents viewed his experiences in his community as a shared struggle. This invariably affected their community's ability to pursue higher education.

In general, an awareness of systemic racism also inspired respondents to see themselves as an important person in their community that could address the gross inequalities that Latinos face. For example, Brandi, hopes to make a difference for Latinos everywhere by eventually becoming a lawyer. In the meantime, she has become more active on campus with social justice and anti-racist groups, in addition to her sorority. She describes her experiences on campus and what motivates her educational goals:

> Right now it's been just trying to see if I can make this world a better place, or the town that I come from a better place, just trying to bring justice to people that deserve it. 'Cos a lot of minorities don't get justice like they should, and that's what I want to work for. I think that's what has really been pushing me, and obviously my family too, things like … later I started to see that [racism] was problem in the U.S., it may not be problem from where I'm from, but it's a problem everywhere else. So, and that's what really bothered me … they are people that I care for. You know? These are people trying to pursue a better life...

For Brandi, learning more about the permanence of racism in U.S. society pushes her to want to address the associated effects of structural inequality, especially in the justice system. She views her educational path as the way she can make a difference.

Similarly, Luciana, a member of the Alpha Sorority at STU, views how she has experienced many of the obstacles faced by Latino students, and she wants to make a difference when it comes to those:

> I've had to kind of deal with a lot of obstacles by myself. I have looked back … because, I am in youth development, my major, I focus on the work I want to do after [which] is to help first generation kids to get the help that they need because

> I felt like I had a lot of limited resources just because my parents weren't aware of the resources… And so I'd like to help them out in that way. And also with language barriers and cultural barriers in school systems. Because the school systems in America are different than back there in their countries.

Luciana wants to help immigrant students who had similar experiences like hers, struggling to find resources and to navigate the institutions that can provide avenues for students to pursue higher education. Similarly, Ivana identifies with students who face similar barriers in the U.S. education system but more broadly with facing an unjust immigration policy system.

> Ivana: Well, my parents immigrated here and only my dad is a permanent resident and my mom is undocumented, so I can relate to it. *Especially being, like, first generation*. Mexican American too. Like, when we travel to Mexico, it's only me, like me and my dad or my siblings. Like, my mom, like, obviously like she can't come and go, so it's just us and she tells us about her stories I guess, about coming here. I feel like I can relate to that [immigrant experience]… I know what you go through, and I know your struggles.

Later she explained how she became a sociology major:

> Ivana: Like, um, I know like I came in as a psych major so I could be kind of like a counselor for juveniles especially, like, minorities because they're more prone, like, um, because of their age to I guess get incarcerated I guess in juvie and stuff. So I wanted to, like, help them, give them other choices like to seek an education. But then, like, once I started learning more about sociology I really like, like the theories and stuff and what they were teaching me. It was really interesting so, like, I decided to switch and then I started taking more, like, um, race and ethnic relations classes and they taught me more about, like, my culture and stuff and what we go through as a, as a group."

Ivana's experience with migration and her interest in racial and ethnic relations courses could be viewed as both working together to promote her educational goals. Both are tied to her personal community orientation, she knew she wanted to make a difference in her community even before she changed majors.

In a conversation with Uriel, he explained how he viewed the stark inequalities that Latinos face in education. I asked him what the biggest obstacle for Latinos in U.S. society was, and his response was insightful into what motivated his own education.

> Uriel: For Latinos? I feel that it is education. Getting educated. Yeah, we may graduate. But there is still a low amount of Latinos in college/universities. I guess the retention levels are very low as well. I've been a part of committees for planning summits where like, one of the main goals or objectives is retention. Because we can come to college but they don't have the necessary knowledge or know the resources as well, to succeed. So, a lot of them get kicked out or drop out. And they don't finish college. So I feel like getting that done, not only getting Latinos in college but to graduate should be one of our major focuses. And after that, going up to a higher level after graduating from undergraduate. A small number of Latinos are going for PhD, Masters programs.
>
> DO: So um, education is important.
>
> Uriel: I feel like it has to be a big deal. How can you fight something if you are not educated? You're not knowledgeable on a subject?
>
> DO: What would you fight? What is there to fight?
>
> Uriel: It's just -- we talk about so much racism. You're never gonna end racism, right? I feel like it's never gonna end. But, *just getting some equality.* Yeah, Latinos are lower class and don't have resources in middle school or high school. It's harder for them to come here to college … But you come to college if you're not ready, you're not going to graduate because you're not ready. High school didn't ready you enough for that. Getting resources for education. So, I feel like they need to get resources for education and at the same time level out the playing field. All these nice good high schools in the suburbs are all güeros, you know, white people. I went to Prosser career academy where all of my friends, all of my IB friends went to college, either community college or university, but my other friends, the ones in shops, what are they doing now? They aren't doing anything. You need to get rid of these vocational programs you're just limiting people. You're not letting them advance because of that. Getting rid of all these little programs – "oh yeah were gonna help you guys get a good education and go get a job outta high school." -- No, you should be encouraging them to go to college to go to university. I noticed that. I was in IB so I got a lot of attention. My teachers would take me out of class just because just to finish an application for a university. And my other friends in shops didn't get that. I'm like, "ey, did you guys ever get that," they'd be like, "no, we never got that."

Uriel is an education major and talks about how education is important for him but also in general in order to address the significant inequalities that Latinos face in the education system. He draws on his own personal experiences, even though he was in the International Baccalaureate, an advance placement program that is meant to prepare high school students for college level coursework, he saw how the tracking system is a problem for students who are not selected for the exclusive program. Importantly, he sees how his experiences and the experiences of his friends around him in high school were generalizable to a common issue among Latinas/os more broadly.

The role that the community serves in promoting the educational goals of respondents also impacts their involvement in college. Adriana sees it as a two-way street, that by helping the community, Latina/o students can empower themselves in their education and then continue to help the community even more. She says,

> To just *help our community and at the same time empower ourselves to reach where we can help them more*. You know like someone who graduated high school can help their community but someone who graduated from college can help them more and someone who has a PhD and a corporate job has all these connections to higher powers that can help the community even more. So, I think another goal of empowering ourselves to reach that level where we can come back and pull others with us to do the same … What we need to do is cater to the outside community, not the college community, we need to cater to- we need to go to East Wood [a predominantly Mexican immigrant trailer home community] and we need to talk to those girl's parents and tell them this is what they could do with an education. This is what they need to do, and we'll help you and this is what FAFSA is, and this is what loan is, like that's what they need. They need-- you know like we need to be with those workers *because those workers are our parents*, like our parents take those jobs too, you know. And we need to-- you know we need to go outside just the student population, but I think that's why we focus on it...

The idea that pursuing more education will open more doors for themselves as well as their community is an underlying theme in respondents' narratives about their own

educational motives. Adriana takes it a step further to suggest that Latino students should become more directly involved with the community to promote the benefits of higher education. For Adriana, the community residents of the local Mexican neighborhood *are* her parents in that she sees them as belonging to the same story and sharing the same struggles.

The direct ties that respondents had to their community sometimes took on quite literal meaning. Agustin recalls a poignant moment where he told his friends that he would likely not be attending his college. The story he shares demonstrates clearly why many respondents may feel that their community needs them to attend college:

> Agustin: I remember I told my, my friends like, "hey, man I'm not going to UT no more. Like, I'm accepted, but I don't have the money to go" and they're like "man, like, come on." Like I, and I remember this other phrase that stuck to me a lot, one of my other friends told me like "you're privileged enough, you have to, you're, like, in the top. You can go to college, we can't. We can't to go to a university like that. You have the chance to go there, like, even if you have the money take out loans, like, if loans have to, you have to take them out to go to college do it, man." And then I remember this, this was from my friend, my friend named Diana who had a kid already. So, coming that from my friend who had a child already at that time letting me know that I was privileged enough to be in the top 10 [percentile of my class], privileged enough to come to a university even though I didn't have the money she made me realize, like, they have to be whatever it takes for you to go to college, just do it. Just do it.
>
> DO: When your friend told you that, how did it make you feel?
>
> Agustin: I mean it made me feel, it made me realize that I *was* privileged, it made me realized that *I had an opportunity that they didn't and I had to*, I have to just because they told me, just because she told me that I feel like I now I have to take the chance.

From the perspective of the students in Latino neighborhoods and schools, those few students who have the chance to achieve higher education are in a privileged position and should take advantage of it on behalf of those who are not garnered such an

opportunity. In Agustin's case, when he was on the fence about whether the opportunity would be worth taking a loan for, his neighborhood friends advised him that his position was not one to be taken lightly and that he had a chance that simply put, they did not.

Agustin has also seen the positive impact that his being in college has had on his friends. His being in college has allowed him to help his friends become productive with their lives. He finds that he has been able to help his friends find their way back to school.

> Agustin: …Most of my friends, like, I know I'm the only one from, like, the big circle of friends that came to an, like, a higher institution, like a four-year institution and *most of them just ended up working or going to, um, college and then dropping out right away*. So, um, throughout this year that I've been in SSU, I have made an influence to a couple of my friends. One of my friends after high school really didn't do anything, he just went into this depression and he stayed at home for, like, about a year and a half. Literally, he was just at home doing nothing. No school, no work. Nothing ... and I felt like I needed to do something about it, so I brought him to, to school to come talk to … a mentor of mine that helped me out a lot here in college and I brought, I brought him to her because he, he was, I feel like he was depressed, you know, and she kind of talked to him and I told him that I was really worried about him, you know, because he was not doing anything with his life and thankfully after she talked to him, he's now back in college. So he has a full year going to CCC, City Community College. So, I feel that I made a difference in his life, as well as my other friend who was on the same pathway; not working, just laying down there, sitting down in the family, and I was able to get him into a program called Sure Jobs, which is a program … to get certification in, like, welding or security and stuff like that, so now he's going to get his certification in welding. So, I feel like being here in college, I feel like they look up to me a lot and I know that I'm privileged enough to be here, so I feel like I should, I have, like, the need to give something back and, you know, I - I like helping people. So I feel like that that's been a good way of me *giving my little piece back to the neighborhood*.

The idea that respondents are continuing their education for and sometimes on behalf of their neighborhood and, more broadly their community, encourages respondents in their educational pursuits. Respondents found that in the face of a systemically racist society

and education system, they have little choice but to continue their education and to do it *because* their community is in a structurally oppressed position. As they saw how many of their family and community members, friends, and peers had been unable to attend college, largely due to structural barriers, respondents shouldered the burden of trying to bring their community and family hopes and aspirations to fruition.

## Sharing More Than Letters: Validating Struggles and Reinforcing Motivation through Latina/o Sororities and Fraternities

Sorority and Fraternity members supported their members in their educational persistence in two major ways. First, the organizations appeal to students who shared the cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds, which in turn resulted in closer relationships between members. Having strong ties to the university in the form of personal relationships also encourages educational persistence. In this way, sorority and fraternity members received validations in their struggles and motivations from their sisters and brothers. The key way that sorority and fraternity members provided support was by reminding each other of their educational motives, thus reinforcing the reasons that respondents provided for their being in college in the first place.

### *Validating and Sharing Struggles*

The following is an excerpt from field notes taken when observing a new member show, where new members present themselves to the Greek community on a given college campus.

> Three young women dressed in all black walked in a line formation, from shortest to tallest, onto the center of a stage in an auditorium. When the reach the center, they turn toward the audience. After they do sorority chants and coordinated call and responses, each new member introduces themselves:

> The first of the line began by breaking away from their previous line formation and walked toward the audience, saying, "*Before I start, where's all my people from the Valley at?!*" much of the audience cheered and then began a sort of monologue introducing herself to the entire audience. She was a business major and stated that she "worked hard for this." She ended with saying, "I may seem small and sweet but *this Latina is on her way to becoming a lawyer*!" and took off her mask and said her name line name and last name and the audience applauded.
>
> The second breaks away from the line, walked toward the audience and introduced herself, saying, "*I'm here and I made it. Started from the bottom and making ya'll feel some type of way about it! A lot of people said I wouldn't make it to where I am! Nu Sorority and I'm on my way! With my sisters behind me, there's no way I'm not gonna get my degree in psychology and become a doctor!*" and took off her mask and said her name line name and last name and the audience applauded.
>
> Number three walks out and she says, "I may be from a small town known as Kyle, Texas but don't ever think this small-town girl has got small dreams! *I have dreams to be a pediatrician! Take a look at my line sisters, you know they are fine. But they're more than that. They are also smart, intelligent, compassionate. With my sister behind me, there's no way I'm not gonna make it! I'm shooting for the stars and that's why my they call me Estrella Gutierrez.* She took off her mask and threw it down forcefully on the stage away from the line."

The presentation highlights a number of interrelated themes, including an awareness of the white racial framing of Latinos, the occupation of central space at a predominantly white university, the structurally unequal position of Latinos in society, and, especially to Latina women, as well as the emphasis on femininity and simultaneous reaction of sexual objectification. The underlying theme that could be highlighted for the purposes of this chapter is the way the new members highlight the support they receive from their sorority and the underlying theme of shared struggles. In this way, through presentations such as these, sororities and fraternities work to validate the experiences of members. In

the context of a repressive predominantly white university, this dynamic can be a refreshing and encouraging for Latino students.

Andres, from an earlier conversation, explains that even though he doesn't experience exactly the same struggles as his friends and fraternity members, he can relate with them on a personal level.

> A lot of friends and brothers that I have, their parents only speak Spanish, you know, um, so I feel like where they're at right now, that's kind of like how my mom was, you know what I mean, with her parents speaking mostly Spanish and her having to, to get through, just get through this country, you know, with parents that only speak Spanish and then her having to learn the language. Because, yeah, when coming here she didn't know the language or she didn't know English, um, and then she would tell me, you know, a lot of the struggle that she had to go through to learn English… Um, and then me, you know, I guess, you know, growing up already kind of knowing English. It's kind of different, you know, and then to meet other people who, who have kind of gone through similar struggles as my parents or as my mom. I'm kind of like, okay, you know, it, I don't know, it. *It's kind of weird to see how, you know, we are all Latinos, but a lot of us are, our journey it's a, it's a little different. I kind of see a little bit of my mom in them. We're on different levels, but we're all trying to, you know, achieve that same goal*.

The shared struggle of Latinos is enough for him to relate to his friends. Andres sees his mother in the experiences and challenges that his peers undergo. By sharing this background, he is able to become closer to his friends who have the same experience. Importantly, he validates his friends experiences by knowing the struggle through his mother.

Concerning strong relationships, Diego clarifies what makes a Latino fraternity a "Latino" fraternity be emphasizing that they share a particular set of struggles and place a high personal value on their family. He suggests that the struggles are one in the same, which results in a tighter relationship with his brothers, as compared to "mainstream"

(predominantly white) fraternity houses, wherein the relationships would not be as strong nor beneficial for him:

> Diego: We all go through at some point to a certain degree of struggle of a Latino. I'm a Latino from Chicago. And I relate to the extent that we are a product of our environment. I grew up four blocks away from Kaiser Park, where it was just gangs, it was a hot spot, it was dangerous at that park. You know. The Latinos there go through a lot of struggles … so, I mean, *being a Latino fraternity and being a Latino, we have that in common, we struggle. Whether it be in academics, with your family, in anything, there is a certain degree of struggle.* As opposed to a mainstream fraternity, which is white, you see the houses they got, it's not as much of a struggle for them. But that just gives us a better sense of brotherhood. I know these guys, what their names are, I know what their majors are, I know where they live. Now if I were to live in a mainstream house, I wouldn't even know those people.

Respondents often relied on their sorority and fraternity sisters and brothers for support. The effectiveness of support depended on whether their own experiences could be validated. For example, Angel's comments paralleled Diego's above when talked about what made him join the Gamma Fraternity chapter at Southern Tech. He said,

> For me, I hold my family very high. And I see that in them too. They always talk great about their family and not just their family but we have become a family as well. It's just that bond of friendship and loyalty. And always being there for each other. And that's what got me into 'em. The fact that even before I joined them they were still keeping up wit' me. They even told me, "if you don't want to join it's alright. You can still be our friend." They showed they cared. So that's something that… that's how you gain my trust. *So it was that and besides being Latino and the same family struggles. Yeah, and also that, when I learn about their struggles as well, I'm like, yo, I can relate to 'em. We went through the same thing.* So, whenever I talk about something. I will actually listen to their advice. 'Cos I can't take advice from someone who hasn't been through it. Like I never liked saying … telling somebody 'I know what you're going through,' when I'm not … So that was that, the fact that you can share struggles with a person, you build trust and you're able to … well, with the trust, comes with that advice. So your able to actually listen to peoples advice and rely on them.

The support that comes with having a close friendship to the point of referring to it as a family was something that Angel greatly valued. He saw it as happening largely because

the members shared a struggle with him, lending to their credibility and relatability when giving advice and offering support.

***Reinforcing Motivation: Reminding Each Other of What Matters***

The support that sorority and fraternity members provided each other varied based on how heavily one participated in their organization's activities. Increased participation typically resulted in stronger personal relationships with co-members. In terms of their educational goals, the main way that sorority members supported each other was in reminding each other of each other's' individual sources for educational motivation – the family and community.

When members do not do well academically, their sisters or brothers often advise members by encouraging them to continue their efforts. For instance, Miguel, a mechanical engineering major and member of the Phi Fraternity described how joining his fraternity helped him reassess his progress after a shaky freshman year at Midwest Public University in this way:

> Miguel: Now, this is my sophomore year and I sat back and thought about it and I kind of just asked myself, "Why am I here? What do I have to do?" And now… none of that *skating* stuff. None of that, "You know, what, I'm gonna take it easy." None of that stuff. I just gotto realize *why I am here. And my purpose for it.* And stop feeling like I can do anything and everything and nobody can tell me otherwise. So that was partially the reason why I'm different mode, different mode this year. And actually, *pledging the fraternity, it was actually really changing. It definitely like made me see things in a different light*. It got me to a point where I was like, man, I don't call my mom everyday. And like*, it's because of her that I'm here.* And like, what's wrong with me? And um, my little sisters are just at home without me, missing me, and why can't I pick up a phone and call them?" and that really opened up my eyes.
>
> D: You think your fraternity has helped you see things in a different way?

> Miguel: Like I mentioned before, I was really egoistic, selfish, and I was a special case, a Latino at MPU. I remember the summer before I came here, I would tell people like, "Ey, I'm going to MPU," and people would be like, "Damn, MPU, for real? (impressed)" And that kind of boosted me up. It kind of made my balls grow. Like, "you know what, I'm a badass." And I forgot, I forgot the reason I was here, *why I was here.*
>
> DO: And what's that?
>
> Miguel: *Family. And that's all…*

Miguel's ego had grown out of control for his liking, which caused him to mark his education as a low priority his freshman year. He believes that joining a Latino fraternity allowed him to self-evaluate, to find his purpose in college, and to regain his focus on his education. Miguel's story demonstrates how joining a Latina/o sorority or fraternity has the potential to re-orient new members to point them back in the direction of their educational motivations.

Latina/o sororities and fraternities also provided opportunities for members to foster an understanding for the cultural motivations in members' educational goals. As Luciana explains, "I think the people in the sorority make it a Latina sorority. They create this kind of like Latino culture as a people that are in it. Like we all kind of understand each other's culture or background. I understand her mom because that's how my mom is too. I understand her dad, the way her family runs because we do things the same way, I went through the same thing too." In this way, Luciana is able to understand what motivates her sisters to persist in their education and is able to encourage her members on a cultural and personal level.

One sorority member described joining her sorority in similar terms as Luciana. Tanya, a fourth-year education major says that the process of joining the sorority was one of the most beneficial elements of her sorority involvement,

> DO: What has been the most positive thing that you've gotten out of being in your sorority?
>
> Tanya: Um. Definitely my [induction] process. My process has given me the most … that Alpha Sorority has ever offered me. It's helped me. *It really opened up my eyes.* It put the mirror in front of myself. I was able to see where my bad qualities and also my good qualities that I didn't know were there. *I saw my values* and … 'cos anyone can say, "oh yeah, my family is very important to me," but *I didn't realize how high I held my family* and what they thought of me.
>
> DO: So then how your family sees you is very important to you?
>
> Tanya: Yeah. Very important to me. Yeah I mean, yeah, I knew like, *I just want to make sure my mom is happy with what I do but it didn't really hit me until after the process,* going through the process. It helped me get more confidence in myself."

Tanya describes how in her induction process, she was able to assess her personal weaknesses and strengths and to ultimately gain more confidence. This very likely contributed to her educational persistence, as self-confidence could have further empowered her to take initiative in class discussions and assignments. Moreover, she notes that the induction process also enabled her to realize how important her mother's approval was for her and the high value that she places on her family. The family as motivation theme is implied her comments there.

Sorority and fraternity members often times provided advice directly to one another. Miguel, from the preceding example, later discussed in more depth what served as a reminder for him to focus on his academic endeavors. Miguel describes the

impression that two senior fraternity brothers that recently graduated made on him and his studies when they visited:

> Elian brought up a good point that, *the brothers that have come before me, have come from a similar situation or worse situation that I have*. So, there's a lot of things they said that really got to me. Max and Elian came to visit, they opened up to us, they said, "Dude, we fucked up. We really fucked up our undergrad. We really fucked up. We traded girls, and drugs for good grades, you guys don't do that." They had a deep-ass conversation with me and Guillermo (another member). And they were like, "Yeah, *pongansen truchas cabrones* (get focused). Go to the library, do the fuckin' study hours, you know? Like this is legit. After this, it gets real." They pretty much woke me up again. Because I started slacking off again. I got to the point where I had all the answers to all my homeworks, because I had friends who were in the Engineering House who had all the answers. So, I was like, "F*ck it, I'm gonna go out starting Thursday nights," because I had all the answers. And that fucked me up last semester too. And that conversation woke me up.

Miguel described some of the mentorship that he has received in form of cautionary tales from older members. It is noteworthy that the advice came from a close source, brothers with which he had spent some time with before they graduated. While they were senior, they remained relatable. Sorority and fraternity involvement also reminded members of the important role that their community has played in motivation their educational goals. Nelson met some of his fraternity brothers from across the country and found that they shared a struggle that they needed to address together.

> [My fraternity has] definitely made me more politically aware, especially because of how many people are actually politically involved in our organization. Um like learning about everybody else's culture and where they're from. You know, it has helped me out a lot. Uh, like when we went to our national conference, you know I was talking to some guys from New York, L.A., all over the place and *they were telling me how their life style was and it was crazy to realize like how alike we all were. It was a consensus, like we all grew up in really shitty neighborhoods, high crime rates, first ones to go to college, and it was like, you know, "okay -- there's a trend here."* And uh, its definitely made me think and you know, after I graduate I'm definitely gonna stay involved.

For Nelson, going to a national meeting to network with fraternity brothers from other places allowed him to see how he is linked to their experiences and what the shared social problems are among his community. This enabled him to maintain that tie to his community that motivates his educational goals.

Sorority and fraternity members provided each other with mentorship and support by validating each other's personal and shared struggles. Importantly, mentorship occurred in a context where members understood each other based on personal experience. This in turn enabled members to trust each other and to provide each other with mentorship and advice. Often times, the sorority or fraternity members reminded each other of what mattered: prioritizing their education to serve their family and community.

## Conclusion

Latina/o sorority and fraternity members cited their family and their community as the main reason for their persisting in their college education. First, respondents recalled having learned to value education from their parents and family at an early age. This is consistent with previous research that suggests that home-culture frames gained from the family provide much needed support for survival. As Feagin (2010) writes, "counter-frames have provided important tool kits enabling both individuals and groups to effectively counter recurring white hostility and discrimination" (p. 159). In this way, home-culture counter-frames in the form of narratives of struggle and sacrifice translated into productive educational values and resources for Latina/o college students in their academic trajectories.

Building on previous research, I find that by drawing on narratives of *sacrifice and struggle* experienced their family members, respondents found the motivation to continue their education and to persist in college. They viewed this as the only path to redeem the great sacrifice and struggle that their family has encountered. This dynamic is not surprising given that a large majority of respondents were first generation students from working class backgrounds. At the same time, these students were not the first in their family to *attempt* to obtain a college diploma or post-secondary education. In fact, the majority of respondents had family members that had attempted to pursue higher education but had not completed the degree. It should also be no surprise then, that respondents were also acutely aware of the gross inequalities in education that both their families and communities encounter as well as the widespread consequences of this on their communities. In this way, respondents viewed their role as Latino college students as bearing the burden of challenging systemic racism in education by accomplishing what has been withheld from their family and community: finishing their college degrees.

Sorority and fraternity involvement provided considerable support for members in a number of different ways. First, members shared experiences, backgrounds, and goals: namely, to be among the first in their family and community to graduate college. By sharing these experiences and goals, they validated each other's experiences and strengthened one another's resolve. More directly, members provided each other with advice and mentorship. Most frequently, this mentorship and advice circled around reminding members of their personal motivations for pursuing a college degree, that is,

their family and community. Importantly, the fact that members shared common experiences with hardship made their advice and mentorship relatable, credible and trustworthy in the eyes of the recipient. Ultimately, facing significant adversity, sorority and fraternity involvement resulted in positive encouragement toward the educational persistence among Latina/o students.

# CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSION: LATINA/O RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE IN COLLEGE - TRANSFORMING PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITIES

In this chapter, I examine how Latino college students resist racism in white racial places in order to persist in their education. I first examine how Latina/o sororities and fraternities develop programs that disrupt the normative whiteness of white racial places. I find that the prominent occupation of physical space in university settings attracts new members to these organizations. Because Latina/o student presence and membership in university settings is delegitimized, Latina/o sororities and fraternities work to "build bridges" into the white racial place by creating opportunities for minorities to become part of the university, either physically and/or by developing programs that would enable Latinas/os to enroll in college in the future. At the same time, the individual members of sororities and fraternities take the lessons they learn from participating in their organizations and apply them in their daily lives in academic settings by questioning and disrupting white normativity in the classroom.

Then, in order to address the profound sense of racialized nonbelonging that Latinas/os experience at their universities, I examine how Latina/o sorority and fraternity membership provides members with a sense of racialized belonging. Racialized belonging refers to the sense of community that Latina/o students develop through their sorority and fraternity networks. This community of belonging included persons with shared values and goals, who could provide authentic emotional support, and those who

could sympathize with having experienced racism and could provide solidarity in the face of racism. Finally, I outline the three main ways in which respondents interpreted racist aggressions and coped with racism. These three paths included counternarrating and resisting by being, confronting racists, and resistance by no reaction.

**Understanding Resistance to Racism in College**

In chapters two and three of this dissertation, I examined the racist aggressions that Latina/o college students experience at predominantly white universities. I found that their experiences with racism serve to delegitimize their identities as students and full members of the campus community. Latina/o students experienced racism in the form of racist aggressions from university agents. Indeed, racist aggressions can have negative impacts on the educational paths of those who experience them. Building on these findings, in this chapter I explore how Latina/o students respond to racism in college.

Before we examine resistance to racism, it is useful to develop a working definition for resistance. It is important to consider that, by defining racism in college according to the various processes that result in lower enrollment and higher college dropout rates among Latinas/os, the decision to persist in college in the face of racism can be viewed as a form of resistance to racism. Accordingly, I present a typology of resistance in college that includes three forms of responses to racist aggressions from Latina/o fraternity and sorority members. These responses were consistently patterned across individuals pertaining to all organizations and universities included in the study sample. First, respondents "counter-narrated" racism by, in their words, contradicting

racist beliefs about Latinos through behaviors that "break stereotypes" and by "being successful" in college. At the same time, several respondents recounted occasions where they directly confronted racist aggressors to challenge their perspective and actions. "Being successful" by working towards graduation was a predominant ideology among Latina/o sororities and fraternities. In this way, respondents also resisted racism by *not* reacting to racist aggressions and continuing behaviors or practices that contributed to their academic persistence and success. I describe the three forms of resistance in detail in subsections below.

"Resistance to racism" has been generally misinterpreted as a decision to participate in direct protest, but more often through organized direct action with the goal of overthrowing or challenging discriminatory practices. Arguably, this is not the goal of most Latina/o college organizations. In fact, most organizations seek to accomplish many of the same goals of Latina/o sororities and fraternities. As I demonstrate below, Latina/o Greek organizations seek to disrupt only the whiteness-normalizing, unjust dynamics in their university. These dynamics delegitimize and marginalize Latina/o students in profound ways that affect their academic outcomes. In truth, the ways that Latina/o students trespass against many of the white racial place dynamics demonstrate how they seek to transform their university into a place that supports social justice and racial equality goals. The transformations that the organizations placed great effort into were the central source of resistance that formed the bases of other forms of individual and shared resistance to racism at the university. I examine the organizations first, then

move on to describe how they have affected individual behavior in the hopes of creating positive social change.

**"Building Bridges" to Higher Education: Disrupting White Racial Places**

When Nelson described what most attracted him to his fraternity before joining, he emphasized that the appeal was in the value that they place on their culture and identity, but also the prominence with which they display their culture while attending their university. He said,

> That was the biggest thing, more so of who they identify themselves as, you know, like that was it for me. They weren't afraid to identify themselves and the yell out in the crowd that they were a *Latino* fraternity. *I was like,* "*damn, that's pretty ballsy on a campus like this,*" you know, *that's pretty down.*

Ultimately, Latina/o sororities and fraternities embody the collective experiences of their members in their organizational identity as well as in their shared traditions and rituals. Nelson is referring to the "call" or "chant" that many sororities and fraternities have that identifies their organization. This is a popular custom among Black, Latina/o, and many Asian –based sororities and fraternities, and each organization has their unique call(s) or chant(s). Specifically, these cultures have been historically constructed as a byproduct of a lengthy history of de jure and later, de facto segregation in higher education.

"Place," referring to its physical and symbolic definition, also takes an analytical center stage in Nelson's explanation again. Latina/o sorority and fraternities participated in events and programs that challenged many of the dominant frameworks guiding the white racial place. If the white racial place delegitimized Latina/o student presence at their university, then the programs developed and hosted by Latina/o sororities and fraternities empowered Latina/o students by creating a sense of belonging. If dynamics

in the white racial place made Latina/o students feel hyper-invisible, then Latina/o sororities and fraternities gave them recognition and belonging at their university. Indeed, Latina/o sorority and fraternity -sponsored events where they temporarily controlled a central or otherwise valuable campus area were particularly important for respondents. "Greek Showcases" or "Step & Stroll Shows" are an example of one way in which Latina/o and other culturally-based sororities and fraternities control public space within the university, if albeit temporarily. Nearly every campus with an active culturally-based Greek community hosts showcases, and the one at Southern Tech was especially telling as my field notes revealed:

> A sizable crowd had gathered outside at Ward Plaza. Possibly around 50 students stood around a stage outside on the main plaza. The audience appeared to be comprised mainly by Greeks as visible by their jackets, shirts, and other paraphernalia. Nearly everyone there was a person of color. The event seemed commonplace, everyone seemed comfortable in their group. Fraternity and sorority members of various organizations greeted each other as though they all knew each other prior to the event. As we waited for the show to begin, members would frequently cross the plaza to say hello to one another, but for the most part, throughout the event, each sorority and fraternity group stayed together …
>
> After a transitionary rustle in the crowd and after some discussion among the show organizers on stage, the stage is cleared and music begins to play loudly from a large speaker next to the stage. The first group, members of Omicron Sorority, took to stage and began with hip-hop music and slowly performed danced. Then, the music transitions to Reggaeton. The crowd cheers more loudly than they had before. They continue their stroll and end with the crowd applauding in support.
>
> After a few organizations completed their performances, including an Asian sorority and another Latina sorority, the Sigma Fraternity took to stage and performed a choreographed dance to Mexican Regional Cumbia music. At this point the crowd cheered more loudly than ever before. The next group, members of the Gamma Fraternity seemed to steal the show by performing a choreographed dance to a remixed version of John Legend's popular "All of Me" R&B song over a bachata tune. The entire audience went wild with loud applause and cheers …

> After the official event concluded, organizers thanked the audience and gave closing remarks. Several sorority and fraternity groups remained in the plaza for another half hour where they mingled and made plans for after the event. Several others continued to do their stroll or perform another chant amidst the slowly dispersing crowd.

When the audience cheered for the Gamma Fraternity members, this would be the loudest I would hear them all night. The pattern I identified in the field notes above consistently reflected how the groups received more attention and praise based on whether they introduced a form of Latino or Spanish-language music into their performance. When the Gamma Fraternity introduced a mixture of R&B and Reggaeton, the mostly Latina/o audience cheered the loudest. The audience was cheering as much in support of the members of the Gamma Fraternity who performed well, as their displaying and extolling of Latina/o culture. The fraternity included Bachata, Merengue, and Hip-Hop/R & B – an array of cultural tastes – in their performance. Importantly, these cultural and musical tastes represented those of the audience – Latina/o students at Southern Tech.

At the same time, it is crucial that we recognize that this event takes place in a central area of the campus, one that is typically used for live performances and university-sponsored and campus-wide special events. This reflects a defining element of the white racial place concept – the university controls and limits the use of physical space on campus, perpetuating both the physical and symbolic dominance of white student representation. As a result, when Latina/o sororities and fraternities sought to develop programs or events, they subverted the cultural domination they faced on a daily basis on campus often by physically creating presence within the university.

Consider why Miguel enjoyed one if his fraternity's events so much. When I asked him if there was one of his organization's events that he was especially proud of, he replied without hesitation: "The tamborazo." A tamborazo is a small Mexican Band with a sound characterized by a loud bass percussion and trumpet. Under usual circumstances, the music is typical for what for many Mexican Americans play at family parties or celebrations. In the context of the white racial place, however, a Latina/o group hosting a tamborazo band performance on campus is an act of disruption.

> Miguel: Well, we heard of "Cultural Nights," a lot of events at the Student Center that appeal to a specific culture and we were like, you know what? Why don't we do that? We need to do that. And it led up for us to, I know someone who can come down, and let's get it done. I was like, dang, I couldn't even believe even locals came. It was a good event. *It was, I felt like it was a good way for us to connect other Latinos in school as well as in the community.* I felt like it was a good step forward, and we're thinking of making it an annual thing, it can, it can be something huge in the years coming up.
>
> DO: Who went to that event?
>
> Miguel: A lot of the Latino Greek organization members. Townies -- I went to McDonalds earlier and I invited a Mexican family that was there, they live in the area, I invited them and they came. My cousin and my Line Brothers' coworkers at TGI Fridays are all Mexican and they came too. So, we appealed to a lot of people. Man, I felt, I felt like it was a step forward. I'm glad. I'm glad we did this and to be a part of it.
>
> Uhm, let me give you an example. Um, the Up-Delts claimed they had a *tamborazo* before us. They had it at their house, and they had it as a closed event. When we put up U of I's first *tamborazo*, come through. They were like, "No, we had it first." We were like, but you guys had it in your house and you didn't put it out there and you guys just had a few brothers, you know? So, I was like, that's good, *that's kind of what separates us from them.*
>
> DO: Who?
>
> Miguel: The whole mainstream idea. The whole we're kind of *just* doing us -- and us only -- kind of thing. You guys do you. And *we're doing us, we're also doing people surrounding us. And that was the tamborazo.*

The Up-Delts are a fraternity associated with the WFC and have a fraternity house on Fraternity Row – the neighborhood near campus where many of the prestigious, predominantly white fraternity houses are located. The Up-Delts are known for also having a large number of Latino members, though maintain none of the characteristic traditions or symbols of the Latina/o-oriented sororities or fraternities. Notably, as Miguel explained, the Up-Delts hosted a private tamborazo performance in their house that was invitation only. He notes that the difference between the two events is that the Latino fraternity brought the performance to a central area at the university – a prominent stage associated with mainline university events. He also points out that it was Phi Fraternity's event that brought local Latina/o community residents on to campus together with the Latina/o student population; a very rare event. In this way, Latina/o sororities and fraternities worked to incorporate their communities into the university – communities that have been excluded from higher education in general, and predominantly white universities historically.

Disrupting the normalcy of the white racial place included challenging the assumption of who can be and belong at the university by creating opportunities to build bridges between the local Latino community and the structural barriers that prevent Latinas/os from entering, enrolling, and graduating from such a college. Challenges to the implicit assumptions of the white racial place included a wide range of programs and workshops that empowered Latina/o communities to pursue higher education. For instance, Tanya described one of her sorority's ongoing programs.

> That's one of the things that brought me into Alpha Sorority -- our chapter philanthropy is PODER. It used to be a scholarship program. But for whatever

> reason people stopped applying for the scholarship, 'cos we started out in junior highs, now we molded it where it was different where *we helped motivate little girls whether it was through self-esteem, self-confidence, education, just to show that "hey, you can do this."* To show the right steps to take starting your freshman year in high school. Like, once you get out of junior high, take these steps to help advance your life and make it a lot easier. That's one of the main things that brought me into Alpha Sorority. Alpha Sorority started it before we didn't have a national philanthropy, we just had a chapter philanthropy, and PODER was our philanthropy. Well it was funded by the school and for whatever the reason the school stopped funding us, so we're trying to find the funds again to be able to do more fun things. We haven't been able to do much with the girls for something like 6 months to a year now because we don't have the money. It's only girls. I don't know why. I guess, girls empowering girls. Which is important.

Alpha Sorority's PODER program focused on guiding young Latina women from the local community on a path toward higher education, providing them with positive role models, as well as valuable knowledge and information about how to get into college. That the sorority was able to develop such an ongoing program was impressive, given the challenging academic expectations at a selective university such as Southern Tech. Importantly, the goal was to develop the means by which more Latinas could achieve higher education, potentially increasing the representation of Latinas/os in predominantly white universities.

Programs and events that attempted to "bridge" across the symbolic and physical boundaries around the university by bringing in more Latinas/os into the white racial place is effectively an act of resistance to the racism that is structurally embedded in predominantly white universities. Specifically, challenging who can be and belong at predominantly white universities is both an implicit and explicit process that organizations participated in. Latinas/os were disrupting the white racial place by bringing in their culture and their community to the center of attention at the university.

Predominantly white universities, especially those that maintain a predominantly white culture and identity, continue to exclude Latinas/os from the university, thus creating a need among Latina/o students to take it upon themselves to build bridges in to the place and challenge the hidden assumptions about who can be and belong at the university.

**Resisting by Bringing in Our Culture, Perspectives, & Community into the Classroom**

When Latina/o students encountered racist practices that excluded Latina/o issues in university settings they resisted by bringing attention to their culture, identity, and experiences in their academic work. As a consequence, they often faced repression from white agents. For example, remember Marisol's story (in Chapter 2) when her perspective was excluded in her art class. The professor questioned her every time she attempted to bring in her own perspective, she said, "my professor who was very against me, uhm, working in that genre or theme…he would be more critical and just questioning me a lot and making a lot of side comments … and then he, like, *laughed when I presented* my stack of, like, research…" For her white professor, Marisol's Latina-oriented perspective was not welcome in the course. Recall that she wanted to address the *femicides* of Latinas in Juárez, Mexico. Even with facing such an underhanded aggression from an authority figure, Marisol resisted, and brought in her perspective and presented the work in the genre that meant a lot to her. She said, "I was like okay, I'm going to listen to him, and he's right. But then I'm like, no. I'm going to do it, and I think he still got a little upset." Marisol, like many other Latina/o students feel that traditional curriculums often leave out nonwhite perspectives, important to her,

they leave out social justice issues relating to Latina/o communities across the world, effectively excluding her communities' experiences and perspectives from being incorporated into the curriculum.

In fact, several respondents shared stories about how they would find themselves in situations where they were compelled to introduce elements of Latina/o history, culture, or social issues affecting Latinas/os to academic settings. For example, Dolores shared a situation where she was particularly affected by the lack of diversity in perspectives in her communications class where she was one of two Latinas in a class of 50 students. She said,

> In the college of communications, it's predominantly white girls, you know? So, in some of my classes, for example, I can think of a particular instance in my, it's called Speech in American Culture, and we kind of, like, analyze speeches and rhetoric and all that stuff. … When we were finally, at the end of the semester, we were finally analyzing a speech by a Latino, which was Cesar Chavez. Uhm, and so, like, when we were discussing, like, what his objectives were and why everything was happing, happening and what not, um, I sort of felt obligated to kind of, *like obligated to kind of, like, come to his defense as to why he was doing everything or, like, for the reason that these other students wouldn't necessarily understand the struggle beyond the book, like, beyond what they read*. You know, in comparison to, like, someone like me who has, like, my parents have told me about the struggle or, you know, like, even if it's not directly, you know, correlated with what Cesar Chávez did, uhm, I know more than they would.
>
> Because, I've always felt like Latinos, Hispanics, Mexicans have always been lost in history. Like you learn about the struggle between whites and African Americans, but why don't they ever, like, where were the Hispanics during all of this? You know, like even after slavery, or whatever. After all of that, like, where do we fall? And I do think that that's part of the reason why I don't, I'm not as, like, knowledgeable in the history of my ethnicity, you know, like, well when did we start showing up into the United States or, you know, like, what movements have we sparked or you know? Anything like that because it's not integrated into, like, the same kind of teaching that they do in high school… I just think that there needs to be more representation for us.

Because Dolores is one of only two Latinas in the class, she felt obligated to speak up and defend the accomplishments of Cesar Chavez. It is noteworthy that the course as she describes it, is meant to discuss primarily speech mechanics, as well as language and rhetoric, and not necessarily to evaluate the political importance of an event or actor. However, because her classmates seemed to share the perspective that his contributions to American history were not as significant as other historical figures, Dolores was put on the defensive. She attributes her classmates lack of knowledge about the importance of Cesar Chavez to High School curriculums that are also lacking in representation of nonwhite contributions to U.S. history. As a result, she spoke up and voiced her perspective based on what she's learned from the lived experiences of her parents who have worked in agriculture and are immigrants.

It is crucial to note that racist aggressions in the classroom like those described above served as obstacles to Latina/o students learning and to the educational achievement of all students. For example, in the following interaction with Matias, he expressed frustration with the indirect racist aggression he experienced from some of his white peers and professors.

> Matias: I noticed, and it's my largest classes too, it's like 60 or so people in the classroom, and I noticed that whenever I ask a question, because I want to learn more about how it affected minorities because it's a special education class, and they were talking about speech. Like in this one class we were talking about speech pathology or speech problems, *and I was like, well, "how does this affect bilingual and multilingual students or parents of bilingual students?"* 'Cos they don't address those questions in the curriculum, and I want to know because those are the people that I'm going to be working with, and people are just like, "he just wants to know," and I get that vibe sometimes, like, "he's just asking those questions because he's Mexican," you know? And even then, I don't understand they're point because we're in the United States, it's very diverse, we're in this state, which is very diverse as well, and you're going to be

> working with those types of students as well. *You should want to know too. I don't understand why you're limiting, if anything, I feel like my questions are helping you, not hurting you.*
>
> DO: Why do you think that-- what gives you the impression that they're thinking that about you?
>
> Matias: 'Cos, I've heard people just, like *roll their eyes*, or stuff like that. I have seen and noticed that. *And I don't ask that many questions either, I just want to make sure that my professor addresses those things.* And the professor is Caucasian, she does a decent job, but I feel like she doesn't -- she acknowledges white privilege -- but I don't feel like she does much to address it. She aware that it exists, but that's it. She's just aware that it exists.

Matias described the "look" that he gets in the classroom. This look, with which many respondents in this study were familiar with, delegitimized Matias' questions and devalued his perspective. These racist aggressions are indirectly academically discouraging for some students when experienced in the classroom. In fact, this experience could have been an academic obstacle that would have led to a missed learning opportunity if white students had been allowed to direct the class away from topics that did not interest them. However, Matias' insistence that the professor address racial inequalities was a form of resistance to a class discussion that would have otherwise normalized whiteness. In this way, his asking questions defied the delegitimizing effects of white students' racist aggressions. Importantly, his frustration with the fact that all students (all were education majors) could benefit from engaging such topics, the entire class suffers from this missed learning opportunity because of their desire to focus white-oriented topics as opposed to addressing topics that will likely affect their future students and teaching methods.

Matias's frustration was representative of the emotional reactions that racist aggressions can produce, many of which could be also lead to further resistance. In the context of the classroom, settings which are meant to be arenas for learning and objective, intellectual debates, emotional reactions can seem out of place. In reality, emotions are not separate from logic, and when channeled productively can be viewed as a way to reject such premises that protect racist aggressions in the classroom. Consider Miguel's reaction when he was the first to be called on by a white professor in a class where he was the only Latino and only when the topic of the day was "illegal immigration:"

> Miguel: Well, I took one class, English-slash-writing-related and I had a white professor, me dijo, the whole "illegal immigration" shit came up. And I really liked the topic, that was one of the only topics I liked, and I know a lot of people who are illegal. I know what the struggles are, I know the both sides to it. So, when that came up, I got called on.
>
> And I was like, well, hey, you called on me so I'm gonna give you what I got. My dad came here illegally. My uncle came here illegally. They struggled. They didn't eat for three days. My dad came here illegally, left here illegally, back and forth, back and forth. And, he would lose a lot of weight. I would see him and uh he'd stay here get really fat, go back, get skinny. And he actually told me his story about how he was in the back, in the trunk of a car and how alacranes (scorpions) actually got in the trunk. Into the trunk. And un alacran le pico a (stung) his brother. And he started like, he wanted to cry but my dad grabbed him and covered his mouth. And he was like, "you cannot make any noise. You make noise, they catch us. And that's it for us." Long story short, I just told my dad's story. My uncle's story.
>
> I put it all on the table. I kind of made them regret calling on me. Because they didn't think I was gonna open up like that. That and I don't think they've actually ever heard stories like that in person. 'Cos, how you gonna put me on the spot like that? You know? So, I'm gonna give you what you asked for. And I remember she asked me like, what do you think about the illegal immigration. I don't even think I answered the question. I just talked about who I know and what their experiences been. And just like that.

By sharing a personal story about the inhumane conditions the people undergo in the process of undocumented migration, Miguel appealed to the compassion of his classmates and disrupted the "objective" emotionless "debate" style of the class. He continued to say that his commentary was shocking to the class, which was also gratifying to him.

> DO: What was your reaction after the professor called on you?
>
> Miguel: I felt really … I dunno, I felt really good. I felt, "oh, yeah you asked for something and I gave it to you." It's kind of like a f*ck you for asking me -kind of thing. It felt really good. I was kind of like whatever, it just made me really upset that they called on me first.
>
> DO: Why did that make you upset?
>
> Miguel: Uh, because like, she, she like didn't even like ask anybody else first. It was like, "illegal immigration," like, "oh, Miguel, how do you feel?" I was like, well, let me tell you how I feel (laughs).

The fact that he was the only Latino in class and that he was the first to be called upon by the professor upset Miguel, given the topic of the class that day. Miguel believed his response, giving the professor and his classmates an emotional overload of the human costs behind clandestine migration, was effectively a returned insult for making him hyper-visible as the only Latino in the class. By bringing in his family's experiences and his cultural knowledge into the classroom, Marco disrupted the implicit norms and expectations in the course. In this light, Miguel's response was a reactive act of defiance to the racism that Latinas/os continue to experience both inside and outside of the classroom.

Resistance among individual Latina/o students is supported in several ways by membership in a Latina/o sorority or fraternity. Indeed, Latina/o Greek organizations

cultivate programs that bridge Latina/o communities and the white racial place, which undoubtedly reinforces members' beliefs about their role in their community. Concurrently, members gain a sense of belonging in a supportive community network that provides a foundation for emotional and political solidarity within the context of their university, as I discuss below.

**Finding Racialized Belonging in Latina/o Sororities and Fraternities**

As described in Chapter 2, respondents experienced intense forms of racialized nonbelonging at their university. Racialized nonbelonging refers to the total process by which Latina/o students feel like outsiders of the university community because of their race. During this process, respondents described being racialized, being made aware of the white racial framing of their group, being racially alienated from their white peers, and feeling racially excluded from social and academic settings, in addition to experiencing racist aggressions from white agents of the university. As a result, Latina/o students are compelled to find and develop communities of support and belonging. Respondents reported having joined Latina/o sororities and fraternities and having gained various forms of what I term, racialized belonging. Forms of racialized belonging included: authentic, meaningful relationships in a context of familiar culture, a community of shared struggles, values, and goals, and finally, a community of solidarity when facing racism. Below, I highlight examples of racialized belonging, the process by which Latina/o students developed a sense of community within and through their sororities and fraternities.

### *Communities of Belonging: Shared Struggles, Values, and Goals*

"Shared struggles" (a theme also explored in Chapter 4) wherein members draw on cultural resources and shared experiences is a means by which respondents motivated their educational goals and decisions to persist in college. At the same time, shared struggles, in combination with shared values and goals, provided a unifying goal-orientation within each organization. These shared struggles also influenced the values and goals of individual members. When members shared struggles, values, and goals, together they created a sense of community and belonging within and around sorority and fraternity involvement.

Recall Angel's story from Chapter 3, when he described why he rejected the university identity. I suggested that this was the outcome of a lengthy delegitimizing process, and instead of embracing the university identity, he confirmed that he derived a sense of belonging from his fraternity and *not* from his university community. Concerning his fraternity, he said, "I think that's what I found, like a sub-group but not necessarily that I can identify myself with being a true Eagle. Because I'm not." He later elaborated that he had found a community consisting of others who also had felt as though at some point they did not belong.

> Angel: It's just that I found somebody else, that felt left out here and I guess we all got together …and we feel good now.
>
> DO: Do you think that is one of the things that pulls you together in the fraternity?
>
> Angel: Yeah, yeah. I think everybody does from my fraternity. I think you were looking at that group of individuals that you can relate to. 'Cos even then when they started there were two or three members or whatever. I think they all felt like that at some point. You know they were trying to find a group that they can

> relate to that sort of has the same values as you, being Latino, Latino empowerment and that's where you find it. You find it in a fraternity. I mean, not even just in a fraternity it can be in an organization, because I joined an organization as well, MeSA – Mexican Student Association. But even then, when I joined MeSA, like, I didn't really feel like, I didn't like the organization. I consider myself Mexican but I really didn't feel … I didn't like it so much. I think there is more to it than just being Latino or Mexican … there has to be more to it that you can relate to. With these guys it was that they know how it feels to be left out. The struggle from your family, personal struggle and other values. Friendship and loyalty.

Certainly, Angel adds that one thing he likes about his fraternity is that many members have felt "left out" (i.e. like they did not belong). He adds, however, that the fact that they shared his personal struggles, family background, and other values enabled him to relate with his fraternity brothers more closely than in other non-Greek cultural organizations.

The ability to relate with members based on shared values and goals created a sense of community and belonging among sorority and fraternity members. These values and goals oriented the sorority or fraternity activities, which then served to promote the overall mission of the sorority or fraternity. Sharing values and goals was central to finding belonging in college for respondents. Consider how Tanya describes how she came to belong:

> I found my niche. I found who I identified with. And who was important to me. That's something that I came in worried, cos, like "aw I'm not gonna fit in, I'm not gonna know any of these people, and I don't know where my niche would be." … I started meeting people with *similar values and goals* and stuff and that's what I identified myself with. I met these people and through them I met more people and such and so on. As a freshman, the Multicultural Student Services program or whatever, they had a little ice cream social and that's where I met Aleida and introduced me to Alpha Sorority. And like, I didn't even know multicultural Greeks were around. I didn't know that was a thing. I came in wanting to know, I'm interested in sorority life and Greek life but I wasn't sure if it was what I wanted. Mostly because of the whole cliché (elevates voice in

> mocking nasal tone) "sisterhoood!" You know, (laughs) but once I met with Alpha Sorority, I liked what they stood for, I liked the programs they put together and the founders and how close they were. And I was like, well *this*, I could be a part of this.

To be sure, Tanya found a community by meeting more people with similar values, she eventually met someone in what would become her sorority. Her social niche in college was comprised of her sorority sisters, many of whom had the same values and goals as her. Certainly, the fact that members shared struggles, values, and goals served to strengthen the relationships they were able to develop with other members, thus fostering a stronger sense of belonging as well.

***Communities of Authentic Bonds and Emotional Support***

A common refrain among Latina/o sorority and fraternity members was that they had gained a "second family" or a "home away from home" upon joining their sorority or fraternity. What they referred to a strong sense of sister or brotherhood in the form of authentic, meaningful relationships that generated reciprocal emotional support among members. For instance, Uriel described how he felt after he had joined his fraternity:

> And I pledged and I came out and was more "out there," like, I became a social butterfly all of a sudden. Girls loved me. Guys were cool with me. I didn't ever have so many people knowing my name. Like, Black Greeks were coming up to me during Soul Food Night in the dorms, like, "I heard that you crossed, congratulations!" I was like, "Yeah! I'm in!" (both laugh) you know, I'm in the "cool crowd!" Not that I cared, all of that was secondary to what I really wanted. *I wanted brotherhood -- that sense of family when I came to the university.* That's what I really wanted because that's what I really fell in love with.

In this example, Uriel describes what initially attracted him to his fraternity. In terms of networking, his social capital increased when he became a member. He became "known" among people in his dormitory, and among the members of black and Latina/o

Greek organizations after he joined. But most important to Uriel, he gained a sense of brotherhood and family in the university setting. It was this sense of community that, for respondents, only comes from authentic, meaningful relationships with their sorority or fraternity co-members. Brotherhood or sisterhood were forms of belonging that provided the bases of emotional support among members as they persisted in their academics.

In a similar example, a conversation with Tanya demonstrated how personal authentic and meaningful relationships with co-members is highly valued among Latina/o sororities and fraternities. As we discussed some of the similarities and differences with predominantly white sororities and fraternities and Latina/o organizations, Tanya suggested that the predominantly white sororities and fraternities do not foster authentically meaningful relationships such as to refer to another member as a "sister." For her, this is largely due to the fact that white sorority and fraternity houses generally have anywhere from 60 to 200 members at a time. She explained,

> Tanya: I know you hear about pledge class sizes being that size and I just know that experience from my dance team we know we were very cliquey with each other and um and if we spent time with people it was only with certain ones that's how I imagine WSC like, and, "you're wearing my letters, I know you're name, maybe, but that's pretty much all I know about you" versus Alpha Sorority it's very a lot smaller, I know my sisters, I know when they crossed, I know their majors, where they're from, and all stuff like that. And I can even talk about other sisters from other chapters, I know their names and their majors and other personal stuff about them.
>
> DO: Is that important to you?
>
> Tanya: Yeah. 'Cos the whole reason you join the organization is supposedly "sisterhood" right? And *it's hard to have a sisterhood with a bunch of people that barely know your name.* You can call each other "sister" but what do you really know about them? And that's something that we're making a point of. Even as a freshman, you come in looking for that home-away-from-home. And that is what Alpha Sorority has provided for a lot of us.

Authentic relationships with co-members is one of the main ways that respondents described that their sorority provided a sense of belonging through a home-away-from-home atmosphere. As Tanya explains in the example above, the whole reason a person joins a sorority is for sisterhood and this consists of having meaningful personal relationships with co-members. According to her definition, this is not possible with larger organizations.

For Vicente, the criteria for authentic relationships was being able to trust in his brothers and friends to "have his back." As he explained, while he was part of other organizations, he felt that the trust between co-members was lacking in them. This was a particularly salient issue for Vicente, given that he is openly gay and requires the trust of his friends.

> Vicente: I joined other organizations. I was in the Mexican Student Association, and honestly, there was a lot of partying that went on with that organization. There was a lot of socials that we had, which is like Latin Night for different clubs. And then we had posadas, and it call consisted of socializing and drinking. And it got to the point were I was just like, who am I clicking with? I mean, I got along with everyone, still to this day I see them around, and I love them, and we reminisce on those days, but they weren't people that I could look back and say *they had my back.* And that's what I felt that I was missing when I came here. *I had friends but I didn't have people that would necessarily back me up in a certain situation.*
>
> DO: It sounds like a lack of trust, sort of, among those other friends?
>
> Vicente: Yeah -- going off of that, personally, I'm gay. And everything makes it much harder, especially coming to a conservative school. But being gay, being Latino, and trying to find somewhere that you *actually fit in,* is so difficult. And um, yeah being what's it called, in my fraternity, I'm actually the only gay brother. And I crossed as a solo as well, so it was something that I did by myself and went through it by myself. But they were welcoming. Personally, I always had trouble finding a place where I could click because a lot of Latinos have

> that old-school culture … but yeah, I definitely been more open with my brothers than I could have with others.

Authentically meaningful relationships wherein Vicente could gain some sense of emotional support were hard to find, not only because he is Latino, but because he is also gay. As a result of the alienation and exclusion that he'd previously felt, Vicente sought friendships that would be supportive of him as he continued to face multiple oppressions.

Respondents shared that they had gained a home-away-from-home in their university context via their Greek organization. In this way, they were able to resist some of the challenges associated with racialized nonbelonging. *Racialized belonging* occurred in friendship circles, typically associated with respondents' sorority or fraternity, that were largely racially homogenous. This is demonstrated in when Luciana describes how she felt uncomfortable and like she did not belong in her church group. She explained:

> Luciana: Mainly my church group. It's the only place where I felt like I didn't belong, just because it was a majority white. They don't have a Hispanic congregation there so it was almost all white. They all had a type of culture that I was not into. Just the white Christian culture and so um, I don't know anything about it. So, I still go to that church just 'cos I mean I have like these two friends who liked being there with and I liked the church, it's just the people, if they're not there, I feel like I did not belong. That's pretty much the only group. Then junior year I kind of went into a depression, not medically, but I was really upset all the time. And that's when I decided to venture out and to looking for a *Latina sorority.* Because that's when I realized my social circle of friends was not as big as I thought it was.
>
> DO: So, you were looking for a sorority to belong to?
>
> Luciana: Yeah, a community.

As Luciana describes, Latina/o sororities and fraternities are racialized partly because they are comprised predominantly of Latinas/os. Importantly, as a response to experiencing racialized nonbelonging, Luciana's instinctive reaction was to search for a sense of community – a sense of *racialized belonging*.

Echoing a similar response, Brandi explains how she joined her sorority in part as a response to the disconcerting lack of racial diversity that she discovered upon attending her university. She explained, "At that time it bothered how there wasn't minorities, but of course that's what a minority it, there's not a lot of us students-- I was still freaked out at how many white students were on our campus, and then I realized well I go to Southern Tech, you know, what do I expect?" As a matter of fact, the low number of people of color at the university was a shock to her. Then, upon learning about the sorority, Brandi began to see the value of the organization,

> So, two of the ladies that were in the sorority, they went to the same high school I did. When I was freshman there they were seniors, so when they came to Southern Tech and I would kind of see all their posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or whatever it was and I saw that they were in a sorority, and they would talk to me about it when they would come visit, and they would kind of influence me, "oh hey, you should join" and then I came over here, I was like "okay, it seems like a good sorority." I guess just being- like at that time like I said it was around the time I was feeling lonely, and just seeing that it was a Hispanic sorority, I was like, "okay, let me be with people who are like me."

The fact that she was affected by the lack of Latinas/os and a lack of racial diversity overall at the university caused Brandi to become more attracted to the idea of a Latina sorority. Importantly, her loneliness caused her to seek out students from a similar background to hers. The sense of belonging that is gained from a Latina/o sorority or fraternity occurs then, in a context of racial and ethnic homogeneity among members.

Respondents were able to find community and meaningful relationships via Latina/o sororities and fraternities.

***Communities of Solidarity and Strength***

Respondents strengthened their resolve in their worldview through participation in a Latina/o sorority or fraternity. By belonging to a community and by sharing the experiences with those they were close to, members were able to gain confidence in their political worldviews enough to voice their counternarratives to racism. For example, Andres gains strength from his being in a fraternity and having been in other Latina/o-oriented organizations in college. His experiences in these organizations has made him more knowledgeable about his community, as well as contributed to his confidence enough to speak on behalf of Latinas/os in general. Noteworthy, it is through having been in a fraternity that he has gained a community.

> Andres: You know, uhm, I am proud to be Latino. Whereas before, yeah, I was, I was proud, but I wouldn't speak up. I was more reserved and I'd be like, "okay, that's what they say about my people." *I didn't really know how to defend myself or defend my community.* And now I feel like I, I feel pretty confident if that was to ever happen or if someone was to attack, you know, my culture, I feel a lot more comfortable defending myself in a proper way, you know?
>
> DO: What do you think gave you the confidence to speak up?
>
> Andres: Definitely just being more exposed to and involved in the Fraternity and the other organizations I've been in. Uhm, knowing that I have other-- there's other people out there that care as well. That care about the wellbeing of our people. Knowing that that you're not alone. I guess because before, you know, *I kind if felt at some times like I was alone* or other, you know, I didn't realize how much people are willing to sacrifice so much, um. So just seeing that and then just getting to know more about my own culture and stuff for sure. That's definitely it. Now I'm like okay, you know what, I do know what it is to be Latino and I do know the struggles that my people have gone through and what many people are still going through. So now, I can speak on behalf of all that I know. Whereas I feel like before I didn't really know too much.

Whereas Andres felt alone prior to joining his fraternity, he now feels that because there are other people out there that also care about his community, that he can speak up. In this way, he found a community of belonging through building solidarity about issues affecting Latinas/os at large.

Racialized belonging was also characterized by an emotional reaction when others close to respondents experience racist aggressions. Even when respondents did not report that they had personally experienced any form of discrimination, they expressed solidarity with those who had. For instance, Ramiro retold a story about a neophyte member of his chapter, Juan, who had experienced a traumatic form of racial exclusion from a major university spirit organization (see Chapter 2).

> Ramiro: It hasn't happened to me because like I try to avoid these places, but like one of my neos like he wanted to be a part of the Blazers on campus -- it's the organization that takes care of Viper, the mascot, the Rattlesnake. Uhm, and so he wanted to do it, but he was the only Latino whenever he went in there, but like in a room with like two-hundred guys. And so, like he said so himself, he was like, "I just feel out of place." And then they didn't accept him. Which I mean, personally for me, I feel like it just had to deal with simply just his appearance and also his name you know, like, "Becerra", you know, that's his last name, so it's like you know I'm sure they went down a check list and then took him off just cause of his last name, you know.
>
> DO: Do you know how many they usually accept every year?
>
> Ramiro: Uhm. I want to say about 60. I think it's- I think it's a pretty big number. So like for him, I know he's very heavily involved. So, I was like *I don't see why they wouldn't accept him, you know?*

For Ramiro, it was predictable that Juan was excluded from membership in the prestigious and selective predominantly white spirit group at U of S. In retelling this story about his chapter brother, Ramiro conveyed a tone of lament and heartfelt

sympathy for his brother. When his chapter brother experienced nonbelonging, Ramiro was there for him and provided emotional support. In this way, the fraternity served as a community of solidarity in a context of significant racial hostility.

Notably, although Latina/o sororities and fraternities are predominantly Latina/o, they are not exclusively so. In fact, because sororities and fraternities attracted like-minded prospective members that valued diversity and supported the goals of the organization, white members we also able to provide and take support in this context. In other words, both white and other non-Latina/o members of Latina/o sororities and fraternities also participated in the communities of solidarity.

Consider a story that Adriana mentioned in an interview. She acknowledged that her white sorority sister is culturally aware, and even has a leadership position that requires her to be so. For Adriana, the fact that her sister serves in that capacity demonstrates the need that students will continue to have for a community of solidarity:

> My sister that's white, that isn't Latina, she's not first generation. But she caters to cultural awareness- she's cultural awareness chair. And it fits her perfectly because that's what she likes to do. So, even if they're different struggles, *when you have people who are culturally aware*, there will still be other issues and that could align with those goals, those goals are always going to be there. People can never have too much education, there's always something to learn, people can never stop helping their community, you know. And sisterhood, that's always the key. I'm sure there's always going to be college students who want that support system, that home away from home, so it'll still be here.

Adriana believes that even though her sister is white, her learning about issues that affect Latinas/os and her alignment with the goals of the organization serve the support system that the sorority fosters. Importantly, she notes, her sorority sister was willing to learn about culturally-specific issues related to the organization. At its core, the sisterhood

component of the sorority in combination with the organizational goals that attempt to address the inequalities that exist at the university, together provided the community of solidarity to support members' resistance to racism.

## Latinas/os Empowered: Paths of Resistance to Racism in College

Latina/o students individually responded to racism when they encountered racist aggressions. Responses were closely associated with having gained experience in organizations that supported Latina/o empowerment, as well as having gained emotional and social support in communities of belonging. Respondents described three reactions that they had when they experienced racist aggressions in college. These reactions included counternarrating and resisting by being, personally confronting racists, and resistance by no reaction.

### *Counter-Framing Racist Beliefs: "Disproving Racists by Doing and Being Better"*

Respondents were well-aware that the university is a hostile place for Latinas/os. Take for instance a conversation with Vicente where we discussed why it was challenging for Latinos to attend Southern Tech. He discussed how he mentored a first-year student. When I asked about whether he was suggesting that was common for Latinas/os to experience racial alienation at Southern Tech he reiterated:

> Here in particular, yes, I do think it is, many others feel the same way. For example, that freshman that I talked to, he feels very alienated, and he feels like he doesn't belong, and sometimes he says he just wants to go back to the Valley. But like I told him, he can't give up, it's just because other people don't want to accept the fact that you're here, or whatever, or will try to push you down, why are you gonna let them. Um, again, personally, I've experienced that before of like being pushed down, and not acknowledged. But at the end of the day, me personally, I feel like that makes me stronger. And it allows me to succeed in life, it allows me to be, "hey. I'm here, *I succeed, whether you like it or not."*

Vicente's response is telling in that his advice to his mentee was to do as he does: to "succeed" in spite of clearly experienced racial oppression. Concerning his college experiences, he recognizes that Latinas/os feel alienated at his university if only for the very fact that their experiences are not acknowledged by the majority. Vicente's response was a common feature of counter-narrating racist beliefs about Latinas/os. In another example, Valeria responded to the question, "has your race influenced your experiences in college?" with the following logic.

> I guess in like proving to others that Latinos-- we're- we're rising to the top. Like, we're not- we're not how people say. We're not lazy and all that. We're just -- we want to succeed and we have all these goals, and my big goal is to graduate college and *not everyone can graduate* or *does graduate… So, it's just like proving to others, not to just others,* but to myself that I have a goal and I will, *I will achieve that goal.*

Given the significant structural obstacles are associated with institutionally racist education systems, the fact that Valeria is succeeding despite having experienced these clear disadvantages means a lot to her. In fact, we can see how her striving for success and "proving to others" that she, a Latina woman, can be successful is itself a counter-narrative in that it disproves prevalent stereotypes.

Other respondents identified how a counternarrative is at the core of their organizational activities. Consider Angel's response when he explained his fraternity's goals and mission. He explained, "Yeah, we talk about [our motto] Which is -- we want to unify all Latinos everywhere." He added, however, that there was more to the goals of the organization:

> The whole idea is to be a professional Latino. So, you're trying to get rid of that stereotype, I guess, whatever stereotype people might have of us. There is stereotypes, but I don't agree with any of them. So, *we're trying to erase these*

> *stereotypes be professional and show them that like, "it doesn't matter how harsh our environment has been but we want to succeed.*" We want to do it the right way. So that's the whole idea of being a professional Latino. Plus– we always stress that unity. We don't um we don't want to be… in order for us to have some sort of presence in the U.S. first we gotto unite ourselves. Or presence anywhere, you know, 'cos there is a lot of division between Mexicans and Hondurans or Salvadorians or anywhere else.

In addition to valuing and advancing Latino unity, Angel concludes that the underlying mission of his fraternity is to be a professional Latino, in spite of the structural obstacles. This would serve, in his view, to overturn widely held stereotypes about Latinas/os.

Respondents identified a number of different stereotypes consistent with the white racial framing of Latinas/os. These included being portrayed as "lazy," being trapped in poverty and "harsh environment," and that Latinas/os are not successful in college. For Nelson, the stereotype was not cut and dry, given that he is phenotypically white. In a conversation about subtle racist aggressions, he commented that he has experienced them "on occasion." He explained,

> Nelson: They ask me like, "where I'm from" and they're like, "wow, you're really tall for being, you know, Hispanic" so like "where're you from?" That's always a question. "Like I know you're from Corpus, but *where are you from*?" That's the main one.
>
> DO: So, they really want to know your race or heritage?
>
> Nelson: Yeah, like they ask "oh, where you from?" and I tell them "Corpus" and they're like "*no, where are your parents from?"* I get that one a lot, but I don't see it as a negative thing. That means that I actually stand out. Like it makes my presence known to people, like, "oh shit, Latinos are in college too." You know? So, it makes me feel good and I get to share with them stories of where I came from and where my family came from.

When white peers are unable to easily classify Carlos racially based on preexisting stereotypes about what Latinas/os are "supposed to look like," he is questioned about his

racial background. He sees this event as an opportunity to gain visibility for Latinas/os in college, thus providing a counternarrative to the dominant stereotypes about Latinas/os. In this way, he views his very being in college as a counternarrative.

Similarly, Miguel told a story about his experience attending MPU where he experienced a racist aggression. Concerning experienced racism, though it was clearly a disturbing event for him, he also viewed it as a positive experience. He explained his logic:

> Miguel: [Pause] Uhm, to an extent, I have experienced racism. Yes. I mean, I've felt that a little bit this year. Uhm, me and my roommate from now and actually last year. Me and him are the only Mexicans-slash-Latinos in the dorms or in the Duncan Dorm building. And I remember that day. On the second floor. I was by the water fountain. The same kind of look, like "what are you doing here?" We were moving in, I was with my mom and my sisters and my cousin and it was a lot us and we were moving up and they were helping me out. And there was an older white couple with a kid and they were coming up the stairs and we were by the water fountain because the elevator was by the water fountain. And they looked up and they were a little surprised. And we were looked at really weirdly. Not by, not by the students here, but by the parents. They were like, oh, oh. Like surprised. Like they were surprised. You know? But I definitely feel like in a sense yeah. They didn't look back but you could tell they were a little surprised. You could tell. And they just kept walking.
>
> DO: Why do you think they were surprised?
>
> Miguel: Maybe because it's a PWI - predominantly white institutions. Yeah, they know minorities are here but they like in that amount if that makes sense. They thought they were gonna be around more like them.
>
> DO: When they looked at you that way, how did it make you feel?
>
> Miguel: Um. It didn't make me feel upset or mad it actually made me feel like, Ha! You didn't think I could make it but I did. In a sense. I was like, when I get my degree when your child gets the degree, you're gonna see, you're not gonna look at me like that, you're gonna look at me in a more positive perspective and… But, so, I'm here, you know? *Proved you wrong.*

Because he is attending a predominantly white university, Miguel believes that the white parents of a MPU student expected to not see many racial minorities. When they gave him the "look," he experienced hyper-visibility and in this way, his presence at MPU and his status as a student was delegitimized. His response was self-empowerment by virtue being there, and proving them wrong. That he is attending MPU and will graduate and succeed in spite of their racist expectations is, effectively a living counternarrative.

At the same time respondents also vocalized their counternarratives. For example, when Yolanda shared with her white high school friends the news that she would be attending Southern Tech with the help of some academic scholarships that she had earned, she experienced racist aggressions. She explained,

> Yolanda: They would say things like "oh, it's because you're Hispanic," or they knew my parents were divorced, or because my mom is a teacher, so, "oh, it's because of that." It kind of sucked because these were people that I'd gone to high school with all four years and same classes, same group projects. I went to their house, they came to my house. I mean they saw where I lived. But what they don't understand, and *I've actually had to explain myself* -- a lot of the scholarships that I did receive were community service-based or involvement-based, and I was very involved in high school, like *very*, very involved and that's what I got my scholarships for, and very few had a need requirement or the family income aspect of it.
>
> DO: So, were they making assumptions?
>
> Yolanda: Yeah, they were making assumptions, and it kind of sucked because like I said these were people that I saw every day, hung out with, and stuff like that. Even it kind of stung the times when my best friend would make comments like that, but you know, *I tell them, I've done college all four years myself. Everything extra, Alpha Sorority, all the traveling, all my honor societies that I'm in, that's all like, everything that I cover* [financially]. And, so every now and then when I go home and I see people that never really left our town, they would ask me, and it was the same people that made the comments.

When her white friends committed racist aggressions against Yolanda, they did so by minimizing her academic efforts and accomplishments and indirectly attributing it to affirmative action and related programs. The comments her friends made were racist aggressions because they rely on misconceptions about stereotypes and imply several assumptions about whether or not minorities "deserve" to be in college based solely on merit. In this way, the comments were dominant narratives. These comments were also hurtful to Yolanda, especially those that came from her best friend. Her response, correcting and "telling them" the truth about her academic accomplishments and continued achievement is a counternarrative against their racist assumptions.

Latina/o students resist racism by persisting in their goals to succeed and prevail. Even if they had not experienced direct racism, as in Jimena's case below, she learned about how to resist racism from those who had through an event her sorority hosted. She described the event and her reaction:

> Jimena: Uhm, you know, we interviewed a professor in the Engineering Department. She came from Mexico and she has, like, she's fought her way to be a professor here, um, and to be looked at as an equal by her colleagues because, like, she described it and she said, like, "it's been *tough*." And, um, yeah, and like just academics in general, um, you know, *because we're not always looked at as, you know, the smartest or whatever, but we're able to prove people wrong through our academics, through being here in general, you know what I mean? By succeeding because some of us come from really rough backgrounds, you know, where you didn't even think we had the opportunity to be here and yet we are, so.*
>
> DO: So that professor is an example sort of what the students are doing too?
>
> Jimena: Uh-huh. *Because I think every day, like, is a, is a fight between, not only yourself and the way people look at you, but just, uhm, society in general.* Especially with everything that's going on with the controversies between, like, the presidential elections and everything, uhm, and the way people view Hispanics, and minorities in general.

Jimena believes that Latinas/os have to fight on a daily basis against the racist framing of her group. At the time of the interview, controversy had surrounded then Presidential Candidate Donald Trump's comments about Mexican Americans. The fact that he had gained such popularity combined with the experiences that the Engineering professor had shared about the adversity she faced in attempting to achieve equal treatment within a largely white male academy cemented the stereotypes that Jimena was already aware of. By working hard and remaining in college then, she explains, Latinas/os break stereotypes and resist the dominant narratives about their group.

***Confronting Racist Aggressors***

When respondents were with a larger group they felt more comfortable confronting racist aggressors in their negative framing or delegitimation of Latinas/os. Once together, members emboldened each other to address racism. Recall when Luciana addressed the disrespectful hyper-invisibility imposed upon her sorority by the predominantly white sorority in Chapter 3. The predominantly white sorority that was sponsoring a university-wide event had misspelled her sorority's name in an official capacity. Luciana addressed this by confronting the aggressors directly. She corrected the white sorority members in their error, which rendered her Latina sorority invisible, telling them, "this is disrespectful, honestly, *this is disrespectful to us, because you didn't get our name right*…" Luciana was not alone during this confrontation, as she was accompanied by a Latino fraternity member.

Just as Luciana experienced hyper-invisibility in the form of disrespect, and then confronted the aggressors, several occasions arose wherein respondents felt obligated to

actively respond to a racist aggression. For example, Uriel retold a story about a time he was at a nearby off-campus bar with a group of his chapter brothers. The bar was frequented mainly by university students and on this night a group of predominantly white students got their attention:

> Uriel: And some white guy comes in with a sombrero and it's just like, people still don't learn. He might have thought that it was funny, he probably thought there wasn't gonna be any Mexicans, but like, I found that offensive. Like, "Damn, what's this guy doing wearing a sombrero? He's white." I'm not saying he wasn't Mexican, he could have been Latino in some way but, it's like, he wasn't of our - of our group or Latino, so it's like… (makes confused face). So, one of the brothers went to go confront him about it. Nothing bad happened, but he ended up taking off the hat, which is at the end of the day what we wanted. Yeah, but I feel like, I identify with that [sombrero]. If you were to see that, you would think, Mexican.
>
> DO: How did you feel about that situation?
>
> Uriel: Angered. A little embarrassed that he was wearing it. He must have had Latino, Mexican roommate. Because, upon questioning him about it, he just kept saying it's his roommates, "it's my roommates, it's my roommates." So, it's just like, how did another Mexican, maybe I'm assuming, how's another Mexican just give it to his roommate like that. So, it's anger that not only him, but his roommate too, that he would let him borrow it. It's like, what, you don't care about your culture that much to like, protect it? You're letting a white boy wear it, have fun with it. Do you not see anything wrong with that?

For Uriel, the fact that the white student was wearing a sombrero, was not with a group of Latinos, and was wearing it to a bar in a mocking fashion signaled disrespect. He and his fraternity brothers took this incident as aggressive and racist. In fact, one of his brothers, probably having considered that he had the support of his group, confronted the aggressor directly. To be certain, these the "mocking" of culture is nothing new or unique to college campuses. Latinas/os frequently encounter these overt and covert aggressions when Spanish is mocked (Hill 2009). Spanish especially, which have been

long stigmatized in the U.S., has been the subject of ridicule and degradation (Hill 2009; Schmid 2001; Urciuoli 1996; Anzaldúa 1987).

Several respondents were forward in their confrontation of racist aggressions. Consider for example Angel's stories about some of the occasions when he has felt that he was experiencing racist aggressions. It is possible that he reacted quickly to racist aggressors because he was subjected to racist aggressions more frequently; he had spent time and energy thinking about and recognizing the occasions where he faced such forms of discrimination prior to our interview. At multiple points in his college career, Angel had experienced hyper-invisibility. He explained,

> Whenever you walk around the Student Center you know how they're always giving out flyers, and my friend, the one who looks white, and they would always give him flyers and they would never give me one. And I would be like at first, "nah, I guess they're just giving it to him, I guess so we could share it, but I would never get one." Until one time I got mad, and I remember I told this white chick, I was like, I asked her like "damn, you didn't even ask me if I wanted a flyer, what if I want a flyer?!" She was like "here!" and I was like, "nah, I don't want that shit anymore!" and then she just stayed quiet… But later I reflected on it and I was like "I'm trippin' they're not doing that."

One can see how on this occasion Angel had confirmed that he was being treated differently when he compared himself to his friend, who could pass as white. Being able to observe the differential treatment highlighted for him that he was being ignored by his white peers. Later, he revisited the topic with another example of hyper-invisibility:

> Recently, like two, three days ago, we had an All-Greek Community Meeting. And it as not just minorities; it was also with white fraternities and sororities. It was at Ward Theater and that shit is… it's huge bro. And it was … I was amazed at how many members each white fraternity and sorority has. It was basically filled… they could have filled that whole auditorium just by themselves. It was a few minority Latino fraternities and sororities. Including black fraternities and sororities. The thing was, it was mainly filled with whites, so there wasn't that many seats for us. We thought this was funny. So they ran out of seats, they

> didn't have enough seats for everybody. Not just Latinos but also whites. So we got there, I got to sit in this row with my fraternity and there was two seats left and my brother was right here, right? (points in front of him and to his right) And at the end there was two seats left. And there was some white girls sitting on the floor. And me and this other brother we're behind that brother that had those seats available we were behind. And *we started laughing, we were like, "wait," like, "damn, that's f*cked up! They rather sit on the floor than sit with my brother!" And it was obvious. It was f*ckin' obvious that that was going on. I knew I wasn't making it up because my brother saw that too. We were like, "damn, they don't want to sit next to him, they rather sit on the floor!" But I said that kind of loud and I said it so they can feel guilty right? Like, I was trying make them feel uncomfortable. So, I kept on laughin', laughing loud just so they can feel uncomfortable. I guess they ended up feeling bad so they got up and they sat there. And I was just, after that, I was still being loud, I started saying, 'they just doin' it 'cos I made 'em feel guilty!' (laughs)* they were trying to ignore what I was saying, but it was obvious that they didn't want to sit next to a Latino fraternity.

In both situations, Angel had confronted white aggressors. In the first story, he directly asked the white student about why she had ignored him. In the second story, he made an uncomfortable situation more uncomfortable for his white peers by calling attention to the fact that they did not sit next to a Latino fraternity. He drew attention to the fact that they had ignored the Latino students and the seats next to them.

By directly addressing the interactions that are often veiled behind questions of intentionality and motivation respondents drew attention to the processes that delegitimize their belonging at the university. Confrontations were uncomfortable and often were avoided because of this fact. Importantly, the fact that they occurred so often could cause what other scholars have termed "racial battle fatigue" (Franklin, Smith, and Hung 2014; Smith, Hung and Franklin 2011). Indeed, one would need limitless energy to continuously address the racist aggressions that Latinas/os experience on a daily basis. Nevertheless, Latino students dug in and confronted these inequalities head on.

***Persistence is also Resistance***

While confrontations were limited in number, respondents certainly reacted to racial oppression in general with conscious decision to behave in a counternarrative fashion as a direct response to dominant stereotypes about Latinas/os. At the same time, we must remember that a primary goal for these students is to graduate. For respondents, this imperative is vital for them as first-generation college students. As a result, when faced with racist aggressions, many respondents felt that they had to choose between responding and negatively affecting their status as students or as aspiring professionals.

Respondents acknowledged that they were underrepresented minorities at their university because of structural obstacles and that, especially because of that fact, they needed to maintain their priorities in order so that they could continue their education. Consider for example, Hector's rationale for spending too much time thinking about discrimination he may have experienced. Hector is in his mid-twenties since he started college after serving a term in the U.S. Marines and then beginning college at a highly selective university in Florida. As he says, he is more mature than the rest of his chapter brothers and has the experience of dealing with racism by moving forward. When I asked him if he had ever been treated differently because of his race, he replied:

> Not really. I mean, if somebody tried treating me differently. If somebody tried to treat me different 'cos of my race I'll f*ckin' call them out right away. I have no problem doing it, if is someone tries to. Like it probably happened once or twice and that's about it. I'm at that age, and like I been mature, since I was in the Marines, you know. But I mean, especially, well, like everybody says that they always get treated differently, but like what I always wondered is like, at 18, 19, 20, you know, in college, it's like when I was that age I was in the Marines and like everybody just did their work, you know, it's whatever. *You know, I just did the f*ckin' work and I got it done and I didn't say anything, just got it done.*

Based on his experience in the military, Hector believes that individuals should do their work and brush off any and all distractions. Hector's logic was to simply do the work that you are required in order to progress in your field. While he has not experienced discrimination while in college, he acknowledges that it happens, and he would respond swiftly if it should ever affect him.

Not unlike Hector, several respondents reacted in the same way, even though they would have preferred to have addressed their aggressors. In fact, Latina/o students faced a number racist aggressions from white agents of the university requiring them to make a decision in how they would respond. For example, Heidy retold the story of one occasion when she was working a university office when she experienced a racist aggression.

> I was at work and this guy came up to me and he asked me like what I did and if I was student at U of S and then he asked me, "Oh, where are you from?" and I said "My parents are from Guatemala" and then he was like "Oh, so do you like it better here than in Guatemala," like, "was your experience like you like it better than living there?" Uhm, "I'm pretty sure your experience getting here was challenging." I can't remember exactly what else he said next but then he kind of implied that I'm illegally and that I have more opportunities here than there. I lived [in Guatemala] for like nine months but I didn't really live there … *I was really frustrated and I couldn't really do anything 'cos I was at work.*

Heidy was offended by the underhanded comments that the white agent of the university made to her. Importantly, she was frustrated at the situation and was unable to do anything because she was at work. Her circumstances limited her action insofar as she wanted to remain at her job, which she needed in order to remain enrolled in her college.

The circumstances that constrained the types of responses to racism that students gave were commonly patterned among respondents. Recall that the majority of

respondents were also from working class backgrounds and many worked multiple, part-time, or full-time jobs in order to sustain themselves while in college. Take for instance, a conversation I had with Ramiro about what his response was to the racially-themed parties that took place recently at U of S. While he took the racist parties as a personal racist aggression against his cultural identity, he regretted that he couldn't participate more actively in protests.

> I mean personally, I didn't get involved as much as I could whenever those movements happen… Like the protests, yeah, I tried my best. Even though I just went there for like fifteen minutes 'cos I had to go work and I still went, I still showed up.

Ramiro felt guilty that he could not stay for the entire demonstration where students demanded university-sponsored action against the fraternity that hosted a racist party because had to work. Even though Ramiro couldn't do more, he showed up. In this instance, his limited activity in organized responses to racism on campus was due to financial constraints associated with his class status. In this way, respondents were forced to walk a fine line between spending time reacting to racism and spending time working toward their degree.

Perhaps Dolores' story best demonstrates how although respondents were acutely aware of the racism they were experiencing, they restrained their responses in order to retain access to resources important to their educational persistence. Dolores was a high achieving student throughout high school and she received a scholarship sponsored by the local chamber of commerce of her small rural hometown. The scholarship was a selective award received only by a handful of students that would attend U of S. Dolores

described how she was attending the annual scholarship reception, and how she was the only Latina at the table of awardees.

> The other recipients were talking about all these things that they're doing or what, like, goals they have and whatever and, although I feel like I can talk to anyone, right? Uhm, the conversation was never really directed to include me, I guess. And so, I, at first, I was kind of like well why can't I share with you, like, I know some of those classes too, you know. I've taken that professor and whatnot, the conversation was not really there to include me, it was more to, like, in between them. *And so, after a while I was just like okay. Like I'm just not going to care, I'm just not going to try anymore.* And so, like, although I'm happy that I'm there and *I'm happy that, you know, that these people are helping put me through college,* being in that situation, I'm just like, damn, like, they make me feel so bad. You know, like, I hate being, feeling left out… We go to the same university; we have to have something in common. So, I don't look forward to those banquets and you have to go every year otherwise you don't get it. But, yeah. It's not something that I look forward to or something that I anticipated as much as before I ever experienced anything, before I actually went to the reception where they recognized me. Because leading up to that, I was like, "oh my gosh, like, I can't believe this. I'm so excited. It's going to be amazing, everything I've ever imagined, you know, I'm getting recognized. My parents are going to be there, and now it's just not something that I look forward to at the end of the year.

Certainly, Dolores' scholarship is a crucial source of financial support in her attending college. The fact that she felt trapped in that interaction also highlights her vulnerable social position within the university. Subjected to racial exclusion, she decided to give up on trying to connect with her fellow scholarship recipients. As a result, Dolores felt like she had no alternative but to submit herself to the annual banquets that she no longer looks forward to.

By not responding directly to obvious racist aggressions, Latina/o students preserved the resources that enable them to pursue their academic goals and to persist in their education. Although respondents at times would have preferred to directly address aggressors, and to participate some form of direct protest, respondents decided to go to

work, keep their jobs, or to keep their scholarships, all of which without they would not have been able to continue to succeed in their education.

## Conclusion

When Latina/o students faced significant discrimination in the form of both direct and indirect racist aggressions at their universities, they responded by persisting in their education despite the racial oppression they face. Their perseverance in the face of racist hostility is demonstrated when they explain how and why they reacted the way they did to racist aggressions. Though at times they directly confronted racist aggressors, almost entirely white agents of the university, they more consistently followed paths that lead to their personal academic and social well-being. Respondents were well aware of the racist stereotypes and more broadly, white racial frames that exist about Latinas/os. They viewed their being and more importantly, their *succeeding* in college as a direct response to this and thus, a counternarrative to that dominant worldview about their group.

Since predominantly white universities are places where students experience racialized nonbelonging, then Latina/o sororities and fraternities allowed students to experience belonging within the university. This occurred in the form of networks that allow students to individually and collectively display pride in their cultural identities, and to experience racial solidarity with persons with whom they could forge authentic relationships. These communities of solidarity were particularly valuable, especially because they formed the bases for further political thought and action.

While respondents did not participate in radical politics that attempted to revolutionize or challenge the university through their organizations, they often did so independently. At the same time, as a group, they participated in efforts that attempt to transform the racial landscape of the university by infusing and incorporating Latino issues and culture into the university curriculum and academic contexts. In the classroom, this means that Latino college students find themselves the lone voice of antiracism and social justice, questioning the racist ideologies that predominate classroom discussions at predominantly white universities. In the face of white racial domination, Latina/o sororities and fraternities attempt to create programs in the heart of the university that embrace Latino culture. Together, this worked to incorporate Latina/o communities, those that are racially excluded from higher education, into their university. By creating programs that physically brought members of the local Latino community into the heart of the white racial place -- literally to the central stage on campus -- Latina/o sororities and fraternities disrupted white racial normativity and supremacy at their university.

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APPENDIX A

| Midwest Public University | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** | **Racial and Ethnic Labels** | **Year** | **Major** |
| Marilyn | Alpha Beta Sorority | Mexican / Mexican American / Latina | 5 | Anthropology / Latin American Studies |
| Marisol | Alpha Beta Sorority | Mexican / Mexican American | 4 | Art Education |
| Adriana | Omicron Sorority | Latina/ Mexican | 3 | Healthcare Administration |
| Fernanda | Omicron Sorority | Columbian / Hispanic | 4 | Business Administration |
| Diego | Phi Fraternity | Mexican / Latino | 4 | Computer Engineering |
| Guillermo | Phi Fraternity | Mexican American | 2 | Education |
| Hector | Phi Fraternity | Puerto Rican and German / Czech | 4 | Aviation |
| Joe | Phi Fraternity | Mexican American / Latino | 3 | Community Health |
| Miguel | Phi Fraternity | Mexican / Latino | 2 | Mechanical Engineering |
| Uriel | Phi Fraternity | Mexican American | 4 | History Education |

APPENDIX B

| Southern Technical University | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** | **Racial and Ethnic Labels** | **Year** | **Major** |
| Luciana | Alpha Beta Sorority | Mexican and Peruvian | 4 | Youth Development |
| Tanya | Alpha Beta Sorority | Columbian / Latina/Hispanic | 4 | Math Education |
| Yolanda | Alpha Beta Sorority | Hispanic / Mexican American | 4 | Nursing |
| Angel | Gamma Fraternity | Mexican / Latino | 3 | Film Studies |
| Eric | Gamma Fraternity | Mexican American | 2 | Computer Management |
| Mario | Gamma Fraternity | Mexican American / Hispanic | 2 | Agricultural Economics |
| Santiago | Gamma Fraternity | Mexican / Mexican American | 2 | Industrial Distribution |
| Vicente | Gamma Fraternity | Latino / Mexican American/Hispanic | 4 | Technology Management |
| Ernesto | Phi Fraternity | Mexican American / Hispanic | 3 | Architecture |
| Joe | Phi Fraternity | Mexican / Latino | 3 | Health and Nutrition |
| Nelson | Phi Fraternity | Latino / Mexican-Puerto Rican | 4 | Forensic Science |
| Sebastian | Phi Fraternity | Latino / Mexican American | 2 | Sociology |
| Brandi | Rho Sorority | Mexican American / Hispanic | 3 | Sociology / Spanish |
| Clarisa | Rho Sorority | Mexican / Latina | 2 | Pre-Med |
| Guadalupe | Rho Sorority | Hispanic / Mexican American | 2 | International Studies |
| Ivana | Rho Sorority | Mexican / Latina | 4 | Sociology |
| Nataly | Rho Sorority | El Salvadoran / Hispanic | 2 | Pre-Dentistry |

APPENDIX C

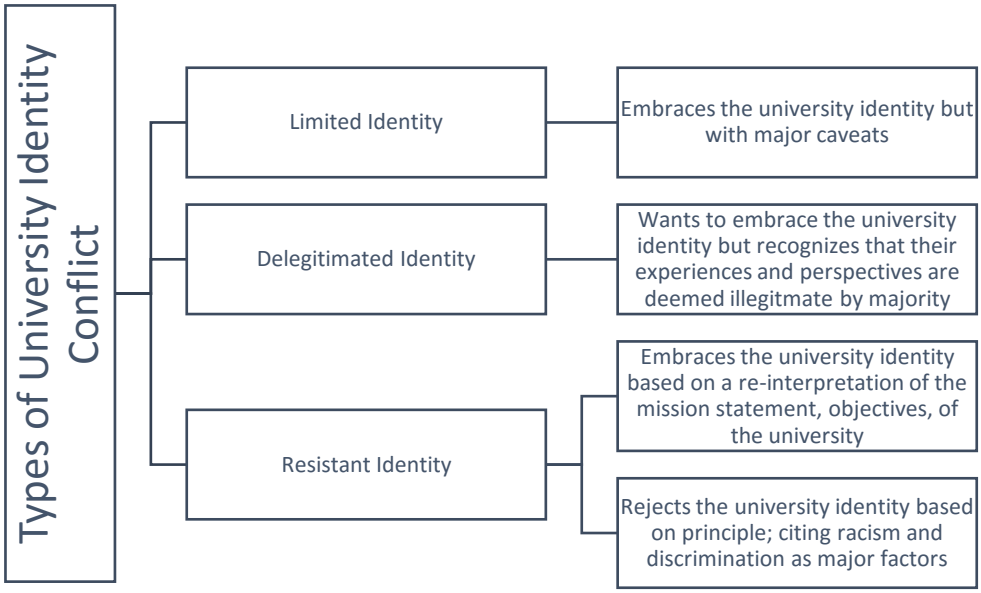
| University of the Southwest | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** | **Racial and Ethnic Labels** | **Year** | **Major** |
| Andres | Gamma Fraternity | Mexican American / Mexican | 5 | History |
| Oscar | Gamma Fraternity | Mexican / Mexican American | 3 | Education |
| Ana | Nu Sorority | Mexican / Chicana | 3 | Mexican American Studies |
| Atina | Nu Sorority | Hispanic / Mexican American | 2 | Mathematics |
| Dolores | Nu Sorority | Mexican / Latina | 2 | Communications |
| Heidy | Nu Sorority | Guatemalan / Hispanic | 3 | Communications, Minor Spanish |
| Jimena | Nu Sorority | Guatemalan / Hispanic | 4 | Human Development Sciences |
| Juanita | Nu Sorority | Hispanic / Latina | 2 | Pre-Law |
| Reyna | Nu Sorority | Honduran / El Salvadoran | 3 | Biology |
| Valeria | Nu Sorority | Puerto Rican | 2 | Communications |
| Agustin | Phi Fraternity | Mexican / Latino | 3 | Human Development Sciences |
| Horacio | Phi Fraternity | Mexican American | 4 | Computer Engineering |
| Juan | Phi Fraternity | Mexican American / Hispanic | 4 | Political Science |
| Matias | Phi Fraternity | Mexican / Mexican American | 4 | Education (Bilingual) |
| Ramiro | Phi Fraternity | Mexican American/ Chicano | 4 | Social Work |

APPENDIX D

**Frequency Table**

| Status | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Women | 20 | 47 |
| Working Class or Low Income | 28 | 65 |
| First Generation in College | 35 | 81 |
| Transfer Student | 9 | 21 |
| Site 1: South Tech | 17 | 40 |
| Site 2: U of S | 16 | 37 |
| Site 3: MPU | 10 | 23 |

APPENDIX E


Types of University Identity Conflict
Limited Identity
Embraces the university identity but with major caveats
Delegitimated Identity
Wants to embrace the university identity but recognizes that their experiences and perspectives are deemed illegitmate by majority
Resistant Identity
Embraces the university identity based on a re-interpretation of the mission statement, objectives, of the university
Rejects the university identity based on principle; citing racism and discrimination as major factors

APPENDIX F

**Family Educational Background**

| **Level of Education Achieved** | **Number** | **Percent** |
|---|---|---|
| First Generation (no one else in extended family attempted college) | 17 | 40 |
| Extended family member attempted 4-year degree, did not complete, or completed technical or junior college. | 12 | 29 |
| Extended family member completed 4-year degree | 6 | 14 |
| One or more parent completed a 4-year degree | 7 | 17 |
| Total | 42 | 100 |