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Student voices: Chicanas/os assess racism and ethnocentrism in California high schools

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**STUDENT VOICES: CHICANAS/OS ASSESS
RACISM AND ETHNOCENTRISM IN CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Mexican American Studies

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Shanna Estelle Fein

December 2001

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ABSTRACT

STUDENT VOICES: CHICANAS/OS ASSESSING RACISM AND ETHNOCENTRISM IN CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS

By Shanna Estelle Fein

This thesis investigates perceptions by Chicana/o college students of racial and ethnic discrimination in high school based upon their personal experiences. In interviews, all of the Chicanas/os described and/or acknowledged racism and/or discrimination in their interpersonal relationships. The research provides descriptions of racial and ethnic discrimination by classmates, teachers, and counselors that show the current state of racism and ethnocentrism in high schools across California. The research offers possible explanations why half of the Chicana/o students did not recognize themselves as victims of racism and/or ethnocentrism. These possibilities include patterns among those who were: foreign-born; born, raised, and educated in the same limited geographic location; studied in the hard sciences; had middle- or upper-class upbringing or aspirations; and mistaken for a member of a different racial group. The research also includes a gendered analysis of how racial and ethnic concerns are perceived differently by Chicanas and Chicanos.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The fires of racism and ethnocentrism are fueled by stereotypes of racial and ethnic identities. Society can mold people to believe historically standing notions that individuals possessing a set of ascribed racial and ethnic attributes have behavioral patterns that are innately attached to that racial and ethnic community. Although these stereotypes create invalid conceptions and ignore the complexity of race and ethnicity, they promote discrimination and prejudice in the interpersonal relationships that occur in many spheres of life.

Pre-conceived notions of behavior based upon interpretations of racial and ethnic identity markers directly and indirectly influence the way that individuals interact with each other in various social institutions. This may be observed in the ways that stereotypes are applied to people who appear representative of a particular racial and ethnic identity. Whether guided by lack of knowledge or by outright prejudice, people tend to make connections between perceived racial and ethnic markers and their personal conceptions of the racial and ethnic group's historical abilities and behaviors (Stangor & Ruble, 1989). For instance, a Jewish American person may encounter people making incorrect assumptions of financial wealth, an African American person may encounter incorrect assumptions of laziness, and an Asian American person may encounter

incorrect assumptions of educational success, while a Chicana/o¹ may encounter incorrect assumptions of educational inadequacies. Stereotypes of these behaviors may be heightened by the ability of others to perceive certain racial and ethnic markers. The more a person's appearance adheres to stereotypes of a specific racial or ethnic group, the more he/she is likely to experience interactions with people that are shaped by the stereotypes of that identity (Ford & Stangor, 1992). This phenomenon fits the pattern of racial and ethnic profiling: authority figures and/or people in positions of power passing judgment on individuals based solely on assumptions made through observation of primary visual information such as physical appearance, style of clothing, and vehicle model.

For Chicanas/os, racial- and ethnic-based discrimination in the educational institution has been a long-standing problem. From the attempts of white-dominated school boards to establish separate school facilities for the children of Mexican immigrants, to the formation of tracking systems to control the intellectual placement of students of color, the education of Chicanas/os has been plagued with cases of both covert and overt racialized and ethnocentric discrimination. Despite the existence of laws and policies currently protecting racial and ethnic groups in both society and schools, many people maintain that high levels of institutionalized discrimination persist (Rodríguez, 1994). Considering the correlation that many people draw between racial and ethnic identity and potential performance in the school system, research needs to

¹ For the purpose of this research paper, the term Chicana/o will refer to people of Mexican ancestry living in the United States. This application of the term is not intended to carry political and/or ideological conceptualizations of Chicana/o identity.

address the educational experiences and perceptions of Chicanas/os to examine how students feel racialized physical appearances and ethnic representations and behaviors have influenced their interpersonal relationships during their instruction.

To investigate the extent to which the educational experiences of Chicanas/os are tainted by racial and ethnic discrimination in interpersonal relations, a number of questions deserve attention. First, do individual Chicanas/os perceive interpersonal relations in their educational experiences as being influenced by their racial and ethnic identities? Second, for those interpreting race and ethnicity as *insignificant* factors, how do they explain what many perceive as tension between Chicanas/os and the educational institution? Third, for those interpreting race and ethnicity as *significant* factors, how do they explain the link between racial and ethnic identity and their educational experiences and interpersonal relations? For example: Which racial and ethnic markers are influential? Who is acting upon these markers? Finally, what is the impact of racially- and ethnically-influenced interactions on individuals' educational experiences? For example: Are their decisions affected by these interactions? If so, how? Do they confront people who make racial and ethnic judgments? Do they perceive effects on their educational opportunities?

In this project, I answered the research questions by completing interviews with Chicana/o college students. Their insight allows us to obtain students' perspectives on how racism and ethnocentrism may affect the educational success of Chicanas/os in high school. This research is important because it suggests ways to address the needs of

Chicana/o students' experiences with discrimination, whether or not they described themselves as victims of racism or ethnocentrism.

This research is also important because of the increasing importance of higher education to the quality of life of adults in the United States. The school system is gaining mounting control over the level of social mobility that people in the country possess. Due to the fact that the educational experience deeply affects life chances, it is important to understand how individual Chicanas/os perceive the link between the quality of their schooling and their racial and ethnic markers.

To determine the extent to which racial and ethnic identity markers affect the interpersonal and institutional relations of Chicana/o high school students, I begin with a literature review that includes an analysis of how racial and ethnic markers are defined, as well as how race and ethnicity have played a role in historic and contemporary experiences of Chicanas/os in various social spaces, with specific attention to the educational institution. In addition, the literature review considers the various ways that previous research has neglected to address racial and ethnic discrimination of Chicanas/os in high school. After these foundations have been laid, the methodology explains how the interviews were intended to meet the goals of the research.

In addition to race and ethnicity, many other factors of identity potentially affect the educational experiences of Chicanas/os in a high school social setting. Some of these possible identity groupings include class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, age, and physical ability. Although class, gender, and sexuality are considered, this study focuses on race and ethnicity because of its centrality to defining the Chicana/o school

experiences. This research does not intend to ignore other racial and ethnic groups that experience possible discrimination, but rather to investigate the specific experiences of Chicanas/os that are created by a unique variety of racial and ethnic markers. This is not to say that Whites, Blacks, Latinas/os, Asian Pacific Islanders, or Native Americans do not face similar racial and ethnic issues, but rather that each group deserves individual attention before broader patterns of racism and ethnocentrism may be analyzed. Concentrating the research on Chicanas/os provides an analysis that focuses on the unique educational experiences of this group.

Whether or not students decide to pursue any level of college after high school, the interpersonal relationships that they develop during high school will affect their life chances. More than any teacher, administrator, or parent, the voices of the Chicana/o students themselves offer the best look into the perceptions and experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination against students in high school. Only by including their perspective can we create a better understanding of the existence of racism and ethnocentrism in the American school system.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research relating specific racial and ethnic markers to discrimination has been extremely limited. Even within the articles and books dealing with racial and ethnic attributes, the discussions have been restricted to describing general patterns of discrimination within the larger Chicana/o community. These sources have created a dialogue on the effects of variations of racial appearance on employment, educational, and housing experiences, but they fall short in two main areas. First, in a field that attempts to voice the experiences of individuals, the articles and books focus upon quantitative data that deny people the opportunity to express their personal reactions to sensitive issues. Second, the concentration on phenotypic features ignores the numerous ethnic markers that contribute to the experiences of Chicanas/os in social, economic, and political institutions.

Bernal and Knight (1993) have researched Chicana/o identity extensively. Their works discuss racial and ethnic identity formation, the development of ethnic identity, and family socialization of ethnic identity and behavior. Their research deals with the fundamental differences between racial and ethnic identification, the correlation between age and ethnic identity development, and the influences of family members' generational status, acculturation, and language on children's ethnic identity. None of their research addresses how racial and ethnic identities mold the experiences of individuals in the educational institution. Bernal and Knight create models to explain how students develop

a sense of racial and ethnic identity among themselves, their family members, and the people of various racial and ethnic groups whom they are asked to identify by the researchers in the experiments. Despite these models, Bernal and Knight never address the students' understanding of how race and ethnicity may or may not influence the relationships they have with classmates, teachers, and administrators.

While Bernal and Knight's work focuses on issues of identity formation, Telles and Murguía's (1990; 1996) research concentrates on how racial and ethnic identity influence individuals' relations to social institutions. Their research investigates Mexicans and Chicanas/os dealing with employment, education, and housing discrimination. The conclusions of Telles and Murguía's various works show patterns between the presence of dark, Indian-featured racial markers and poor social achievement and economic mobility. Similar to Bernal and Knight, the emphasis on quantitative data in Telles and Murguía's research fails to give voice to the day-to-day struggles of individuals.

The research conducted by Bernal and Knight and Telles and Murguía remains an essential part of Chicana/o Studies (as well as psychology and sociology). However, there is a need for research that addresses the effects and the concerns of racism and ethnocentrism both on an individual level and in the educational system. This goes beyond understandings of racial and ethnic identity formation into the psychological well-being and social opportunities of the individuals. Before discussing my findings regarding students' experiences and thoughts on racism and ethnocentrism in high school, the background for comprehending self-perceptions of racial and ethnic discrimination

begins with previous research discussion of how racial and ethnic identities are socially presented, the social impact of racial and ethnic markers, and a brief history of the conflicts experienced by Chicanas/os in educational institutions.

Racial Identity

Most research on racial traits implicitly revolves around biological concepts of phenotype. Ocampo, Bernal, and Knight (1993) support this by recognizing how the role of “genetic transmission...[is] apparent through physical cues” (15). Omi and Winant (1998) reproduce this conceptualization, stating that “race lies in the terrain of innate characteristics, of which...physical attributes provide indicators” (14). Both articles demonstrate that racial features are not a matter of individual choice, but rather biologically linked to identity categorization. Although racial features are biologically determined, racial categories are socially constructed. Race, as a phenotypic identity, is the result of genotypic phenomenon of the parents. Nevertheless, the way that society categorizes individual racial identities depends upon the social meanings attached to racial and ethnic membership in a given society.

Utilizing Ocampo, Bernal, and Knight’s and Omi and Winant’s definitions of race, Codina and Montalvo’s (1994) research discusses how identifiable racial markers influence the educational and occupational opportunities available to Chicanas/os. They explain that the main belief guiding the cycle of racialized privileges is that the attributes of dark skin and African, Indian, or Asian appearance are less valued than light skin and European features. This leads to the concept of “phenotyping,” which Codina and

Montalvo define as occurring when a “member’s phenotype is used to allocate life chances and psychic benefits according to the degree that it resembles that of the [phenotype] value[d]... [by] the dominant society” (296-7). The researchers claim that phenotyping affects both quality of life and well-being, causing negative experiences beyond a person’s control. Thus, as a result of the racialized interaction, personal, permanent, and pervasive feelings of prejudice, discrimination, and depression may occur. The negative sentiments of potential “phenotyping” in the educational institution may impede the intellectual success and psychological development of Chicana/o students by making students distracted from their educational goals. Instead of concentrating on lectures, concepts, and class work essential to their academic development, the students may feel the need to focus their energies on maintaining a defense against the verbal, emotional, psychological, and physical abuses of racism. This possible pattern may be highly anticipated among those Chicana/o students possessing the aforementioned racialized appearance.

The research of Arce, Murguía, and Frisbie (1987) echoes Codina and Montalvo’s explanation of phenotyping, but goes into greater detail in the ways that educational and occupational discrimination against Chicanas/os occurs. Unlike most research on racial discrimination, Arce et al. acknowledge that Chicanas/os experience a combination of internal and external discrimination. As a result, Chicanas/os with varying degrees of racial markers experience different social experiences and life chances. In a society that valorizes light, Caucasian appearance, the fact that some Chicanas/os possess a

distinguishable phenotype establishes grounds for racialized discrimination.² Their research demonstrates that light-skinned, European-featured Chicanas/os receive the greatest levels of formal education. At the same time, dark-skinned, Indian-featured Chicanas/os attain the lowest socioeconomic status. Arce et al. conclude that the lighter the skin color and the more European the features, the higher financial success and occupational prestige an individual may achieve. Their research serves both to support the need for this paper's investigation of racial influences on Chicana/o success in the educational institution and to demonstrate the link between physical appearance and educational advancement, occupational opportunity, and financial stability.

In addition to looking at life chances, Arce et al. investigated the Chicanas'/os' feelings about discrimination. Their research concludes that dark-skinned, Indian-featured individuals reported significantly higher cases of perceived discrimination. This finding demonstrates how racial identity influences individuals' interpretations of interpersonal relations in social institutions. Arce et al. also attribute these perceptions of racial discrimination to the stronger sociocultural and political attachments that these particular Chicanas/os possess. The researchers believe that the marginalization associated with racial markers pressures darker-skinned, Indian-featured Chicanas/os to cling to their community because they see limited access to and acceptance in mainstream American society. In addition to showing how racial identity shapes social relations, Arce et al.'s research shows how the possession of distinct racial markers

² As a general population, Chicanas/os have been stereotyped as belonging to a single racial group that possesses dark-skin and Indian-features. Despite this fallacy, members of the Chicana/o community possess varying degrees of African, Asian, European, and indigenous influences on their racial identities. This creates the categorizations of *indias/os*, *mestizas/os*, and *mulattas/os*.

effectively increases an individual's potential to also possess heightened ethnic identity. These findings reveal that varying degrees of racial and ethnic markers among the Chicana/o populations directly relate to varying perceptions of discrimination.

While the research of Codina and Montalvo and Arce et al. follows educational and occupational life chances, Relethford, Stern, Gaskill, and Hazuda's (1983) work investigates housing differences among Chicanas/os of varying phenotypes in San Antonio, Texas. They acknowledge the fact that different levels of socioeconomic status exist within any single ethnic group. In addition, Relethford, et al. noted that lighter skin corresponded to higher levels of social status and financial stability. Dark-skinned Chicanas/os live in the barrios, while light-skinned Chicanas/os had moved towards the suburban communities. Relethford, et al. suggest that the genetic differences account for the observed social class differences. Although their research makes no specific reference to educational achievement, it demonstrates how variation of physical appearance occurs in a single racialized group and is capable of stratifying the community.

The research of Vázquez, García-Vázquez, Bauman, and Sierra (1997) combines the investigations of economic and psychological privileges influenced by racial markers. Demonstrating the relationship between skin color and life chances, the researchers focus on four main issues: housing segregation, educational and occupational prestige, how darker skinned individuals perceived greater discrimination and had lower scores on self-concept, and conflict and confusion of social roles. Vázquez et al. conclude that skin color significantly influences educational, social, and economic life chances. The

variations in the skin color of the Chicanas/os investigated directly related to the level of success and mobility that individuals experiences in schooling, living conditions, and employment. The researchers argue that this stratification results in less incentive for dark-skinned Chicanas/os to acculturate into mainstream society because they understand their skin color as a fixed obstacle that prevents acceptance. Even within itself, this belief affects life chances because the self-imposed (and socially-supported) marginalization limits opportunity for interaction with, and advancement within, mainstream society.

In comparison to the other researchers, Telles and Murguía (1990) offer more of a historical basis to their work. In their investigation, they discuss the ways that discrimination by physical appearance is historically linked to the political and socioeconomic processes of colonialism. Indigenous features signify conquest and subordination. Telles and Murguía point to colonial México, contemporary México, and the conditions of people of Mexican ancestry in the United States as examples of how skin color has affected people in multiple societies. Researching Mexican American males in San Antonio, Texas, Telles and Murguía used information from the 1979 National Chicano Survey to find that non-Hispanic whites made twice the income of people of Mexican origin. Even among the Chicanos studied, the income among the light-skinned men was 15% higher than that of the darker-skinned. These findings support previous patterns of comparable success based upon skin tone as a racial marker.

In a later work focusing on the effects of phenotype in the educational experiences of Chicanas/os, Telles and Murguía (1996) once again found patterns of

internal differentiation. The light-skinned, European-featured Chicanas/os received 1.5 more years of schooling than the darker, Indian-featured majority of the students. Students in Texas perceived higher levels of phenotypic discrimination than those in California. In addition, the students raised in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods felt more strongly marginalized than those raised in English-speaking neighborhoods. This demonstrates the need to take geographic location and language into consideration when contextualizing racial and ethnic discrimination.

Although racial identity is socially constructed and ascribed, the research clearly demonstrates how specific physical markers are linked to the life chances of Chicanas/os. This is achieved by comparing the treatment of individuals who possess different phenotypic manifestations. The underlying findings among the research on racial identity demonstrate that, while the diversity of Chicana/o markers is expressed by the variations between “European” and “indigenous” appearances, dark hair color, straight hair texture, brown eye color, bronzed skin color, and broad facial structures remain common distinguishing features of the population experiencing the most discrimination. In addition, the findings show how perceptions of individuals’ racial identities influence their relationships with people in ways that affect life chances (i.e. – in education, housing, employment).

Ethnic Identity

While most research discussing racial identity focuses upon physically visible features, the concept of ethnicity proves to be comparatively abstract. For this reason, in

addition to providing definitions, most of the literature review of ethnicity will also include examples of ethnic markers.

Ocampo, Bernal, and Knight (1993) define ethnic identity as the combination of “cultural values, traditions, and behaviors” (15). Unlike the genetic sources of racial identity groupings, ethnicity is “transmitted through socialization processes” that may be observed through “physical cues and more subtle behavioral cues.” Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, and Ocampo (1993) specifically interpret ethnicity as the “role behaviors and traits, values, styles, customs, traditions, and language” that individuals possess (106). Although an observer may not receive direct information on values, customs, and traditions during an initial contact with an individual, the combination of visual and verbal markers allows the spectator to make assumptions about the possible ethnic identity through behavior, stylistic, and linguistic patterns.

Name

Although often representative only of the father’s family heritage, names serve as one manner in which people may make ethnic associations. Names are a fact of life; everyone possesses a given name and a surname. However, there is no research on how individuals’ names act as potential ethnic markers that shape interpersonal relationships. In the educational institution, teachers and counselors know the names of their students before they know the faces with which to associate them. In addition, classmates may learn the names of other students prior to engaging in deeper social conversation. Although the teachers, counselors, and classmates lack information on the student’s

actual personality and accomplishments, the name of an individual can remain a primary source of assumptions about his/her ethnic identity. For example, a student with the first name Vladimir may be linked to a Russian American identity, thus bringing stereotypes of communist political beliefs; a student with the surname O'Connor may be linked to an Irish American identity, thus bringing stereotypes of violent tendencies.

Due to the strong influences of Spanish and indigenous cultures on Chicana/o ancestry, many individuals possess names that clearly reflect their ethnicity. Although it is completely possible that Latinas/os, Filipinas/os, and other groups colonized by the Spaniards possess similar patterns of first names and surnames, the United States' historical relationship and geographic neighboring with México tend to create strong notions of Spanish names as belonging to people of Mexican heritage. This can lead many people to make assumptions about an individual's ethnic identity based solely upon their name, never considering the fact that the individual may be a fourth generation Chicana/o that, for example, has never been to México, does not speak Spanish, and does not practice Catholicism.

Although many Chicanas/os possess names reflecting their Spanish and indigenous heritages, there are increasing exceptions to the rule. Some Chicana/o parents chose to give their children non-Spanish first names. In addition, increases in both biracial and adopted children have created situations where either non-Chicana/o children raised in a Chicana/o ethnic environment maintain the non-Spanish surnames of their father or Chicana/o children raised in a non-Chicana/o ethnic environment possess Spanish first names or surnames despite their failure to associate with the Chicana/o

identity. There are also cases where individuals not belonging to the Chicana/o ethnicity possess Spanish first names like Antonio or Linda. Furthermore, there are instances in which Chicanas/os have Americanized or have legally changed their names, such as José/John and María/Mary. This shows how people, as parents and/or as individuals, consciously avoid ethnic associations that may limit their acceptance into mainstream society.

Although I was unable to locate any research completed on how individuals' names shape their identity and interpersonal relations, the stories of friends and classmates motivate me to include names as ethnic markers. Many people have described situations in which students were placed in ESL or other classes based solely upon their name. Whether a name is Spanish in origin or not, it is an aspect of students' identity that classmates, teachers, and staff may use to categorize them as belonging to a specific ethnic community. In this way, names may influence educational experiences as much as other racial and ethnic markers, such as skin color and language fluency.

Clothing/Accessories

While first names and surnames are ethnic characteristics that may be passed through generations, clothing and accessory choices are based on learned behaviors that may or may not form an ethnic representation. Whether this takes the appearance of a *serape*, a T-shirt with the *piedra del sol*, a necklace with the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, or a tattoo of the *águila*, there are numerous styles and images that have become associated with the Chicana/o youth identity. These allow for people wearing or possessing these

styles and images, regardless of their physical appearance, to be linked to a Chicana/o identity by classmates, faculty, or staff that make assumptions about their attitudes or behaviors.

The type of clothing and accessories that represent the stereotypical Chicana/o identity may be observed in Burciaga's (1995) personal reflections and interpretations of Chicana/o culture. Referring specifically to the visible representations of ethnicity, he mentions the images of "working-class clothes," "tattoos," "T-shirts...[and] medals" among Chicana/o youth (55, 69, 102). In their "naïve but prevalent" assumptions, Burciaga explains how most people still associate Chicanas/os with historical hysteria surrounding *pachucos* and *cholos*. This is important to the research because it shows how certain choices in clothing and accessories influence the opinions that people develop about Chicanas'/os' abilities and behaviors in society.

In addition to the possibility of an individual's clothing and accessories promoting associations with the Chicana/o ethnicity, one must consider the opposite. Most apparel and imagery are not ethnic-based, making it less easy to make connections between appearance and ethnicity. Again, some may choose this clothing as part of meeting certain social expectations.

The movie "Mi Familia" provides an excellent example of the non-stereotypical Chicana/o. The son Guillermo has become a Chicano void of ethnic markers. He changes his name to William, earns a position in a White-dominated field of lawyers, marries into a White family, denies his ethnic history and traditions, prefers to speak English, and dresses in a conservative suit and tie. Although his racial features remain

and may be traced to his Chicano identity, William leaves no hint of his socially constructed ethnic markers. The fact that he voluntarily limits the visibility of his ethnic identity to increase his ability to gain acceptance in mainstream American society suggests that individuals with fewer ethnic markers may experience less discrimination and more opportunity.

Language

Matsuda (1991) explains the various ways in which language affects the treatment of individuals, similar to the manner in which racial markers have influenced the life chances of Chicanas/os. Her research discusses how individuals' pronunciation, phrasing, and word choice all possess traces of their lives and their identities. Speech patterns socially position people, with "low-status" accents often categorized as foreign and unintelligible. Matsuda describes how linguistic formation reflects familial, geographic, educational, and ethnic aspects of individuals' lives, leaving both native- and foreign-born people susceptible to the same accent-based discrimination. Although they may be victims to different degrees of linguistic ethnocentrism, Matsuda's research demonstrates how Chicanas/os born in the United States and México can experience language-based discrimination in their educational experiences.

While Matsuda focuses on how accents are a source of discrimination, other research has investigated how language patterns and language styles are specific markers of the Chicana/o ethnic identity. Some Chicanas/os, regardless of their ability to speak Spanish, possess language formation patterns and verbal phrases that derive from Spanish

grammar, making their Chicano English an ethnic marker. Serrano's (1972) dissertation on the sociocultural influences of language explains that some verbal symbols are limited to members of a single culture within the greater society. In these cases, phonological, grammatical, syntactical, and lexical characteristics evolve within the ethnic group. These linguistic markers are modifications made by the family, community, and culture, despite the English skills acquired in the educational institution. Although they are not visible, the language patterns act as an ethnic marker that other people are capable of perceiving and utilizing to make assumptions about ethnicity after limited interpersonal relations that offer only a small sample of speech.

Departing from the sociocultural influences discussed in Serrano's work, Peñalosa (1980) investigates the specific linguistic phenomenon of Chicano English. He points to the occurrences of interference, mixture, borrowing, and code switching as ethnic markers unique to the Chicano community. Some examples of these concepts include words of multiple meanings like *batería*/battery and the phenomenological limitations like the ability to differentiate between the pronunciation of /sh/ and /ch/, /b/ and /v/, and /s/ and /z/. Similar to language patterns and language styles of Chicano English, these linguistic phenomena also serve as ethnic markers that individuals may utilize to identify someone as Chicana/o.

While Peñalosa exposes the existence of linguistic ethnic markers, Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia (1985) investigate the various relationships between language and social interaction. Their main finding demonstrates a "subjective evaluation" by the listener based upon "previously formed attitudes towards dialects, social class, and ethnic group

membership of the speech” (69). Relating these findings specifically to the Chicanas/os in the educational institution, Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia mention the “negative attitudes” that teachers hold toward Chicano English (72). The teachers believe the fallacy that individuals’ intellect is directly related to their command of the English language. The effects of these negative attitudes are not detailed in their research, but the recognition of the clearly biased attitudes demonstrates a strong potential for discrimination in the interpersonal relationships that occur between the students and their classmates, faculty, and staff at the educational institution based simply upon perceptions of ethnic speech patterns.

When considering accents as ethnic markers, one needs to address additional linguistic phenomena related to ethnicity. In some cases, Chicanas/os raised in certain environments lose trace of any ethnic-based accent. Another phenomenon to consider is that of non-native Spanish-speakers who acquire an accent due to their multiple linguistic abilities. This is significant because individuals of non-Chicana/o identity may become victims of ethnic discrimination due to an identity that others perceive them to possess.

Similar to the ways that racial identity possesses markers, the research on ethnic identity shows how specific visual and verbal markers, both voluntary and unconscious, are linked to Chicana/o identity. There exist a wide range of ethnic markers among Chicanas/os on a socially constructed spectrum between “Americanized” and “Mexican” identity. Patterns among those Chicanas/os who discuss discrimination against their ethnic identity demonstrate that Spanish and Nahuatl names, clothing, tattoos, jewelry,

accessories, linguistic choices and pronunciation increase the likelihood of being victimized by ethnocentrism.

Racial/Ethnic Profiling

Racial and ethnic markers are often used by people in positions of power to make assumptions about individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Assumptions about minorities are often shaped by negative stereotypes. The effects of judging people based solely upon their racial and ethnic markers can occur on two levels: the individual and the institutional. Individual discrimination focuses on how interpersonal relations affect people on a one-on-one basis. Institutionalized discrimination deals with power relations that rule social, economic, and political status, mobility, and opportunity.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (2000), racial profiling is the "practice of substituting skin color for evidence as a grounds of suspicion by law enforcement officials." These exploitations of racial markers are applied to African American motorists, who, for example, are assumed to be associated with either drugs or gangs. The ACLU's description is effective in explaining how a physical aspect of racial identity may influence institutional relations, but they fail to note how other racial and ethnic markers play into the picture. In addition, they never acknowledge that racial profiling occurs to groups other than African American males, to people other than motorists, and in institutions other than law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, the data recognizing how suspicions are played out demonstrates how racial markers may be used

to make extreme assumptions about the attitudinal and behavioral patterns of people of color.

The ACLU (1999) also acknowledged that Chicanas/os joined African Americans as victims of racial profiling. Although they offered no explanations for the pattern, the ACLU stated that the “impact [of racial profiling] on Latinos has not been as widely reported [as it has with African Americans].” This may be due to the fact that Chicana/o victims who are not in possession of citizenship may not feel comfortable in reporting the profiling.

The existence of racial and ethnic profiling demonstrates the differential treatment of people of color in society, including Chicanas/os. This shows that the writing and passage of policies and laws in various social institutions is not enough to protect innocent individuals from the effects of racism and ethnocentrism. In order to fight for equality, the social relations within each institution must be investigated and critiqued. As previously discussed, this research will attempt to begin to address the state of racism and ethnocentrism perceived by Chicanas/os in high schools.

Chicanas/os in the Educational Institution

Despite legislation protecting individuals from racial and ethnic discrimination, *de facto* discrimination persists in many social, economic, and political institutions. Although the majority of these cases occur at a level where adults experience the impact, the sad truth remains that children and youth are also victims of racial and ethnic intolerance. Due to youths’ limited interaction with society, the educational institution

proves to be the main site of discrimination. Since the quality of an individual's educational experience directly impacts their potential to attend a university, achieve a professional career, and plan a stable financial future, an analysis of racial and ethnic discrimination in the educational institution is critical to the continuing battles against racism and ethnocentrism.

San Miguel and Valencia (1998) have compiled some of the most detailed research on the history of racism and ethnocentrism against Chicanas/os in the educational institutions of the Southwestern United States. They include descriptions and analyses of the origins of schooling for Mexican children, the expansion of Chicana/o education, the changing character of public education, and a contemporary critique. As opposed to the community goals of the Mexican schools, San Miguel and Valencia explain that once the Southwest became part of the United States, the relationship between society and education permitted the emergence of "a pattern of institutionalized discrimination" (357). These problems evolved as a result of "a variety of anxieties and fears, including the impact that [Mexicans] could have on American culture, on social and political unity in this country, and on the political hegemony of White America" (361). Discrimination occurred through a combination of segregated facilities and administrative mistreatment, demonstrating the institutional discrimination that existed before laws and policies fell into place (365).

San Miguel and Valencia's interpretations of early racism and ethnocentrism against Chicanas/os are supported by the research of González (1994). As increasing numbers of Mexican families came to the United States to escape violence and to search

for a more secure financial future, enrollment in schools increased. González's research on Mexican schools from the 1890s through the 1930s discusses how many members of the Anglo community panicked in response to the growing Chicana/o population. The Anglo-controlled school boards demanded the segregation of educational institutions on the basis of the racial and ethnic identity of the students. They used the issues of overcrowding, health hazards, intellectual inferiority, and linguistic barriers to establish alternative school facilities, blaming Chicanas/os for the educational institution's faults.

As Paul Espinosa's documentary "The Lemon Grove Incident" (1986) further demonstrates, Chicana/o students in the early 1930s were separated based upon their racial and ethnic markers as opposed to their educational abilities. This resulted in some native-born children and fluent English-speakers being placed in an educational environment unable to meet their academic needs. This demonstrates how assumptions based upon racial and ethnic markers lead certain Chicanas/os to receive an unequal educational experience.

The second portion of San Miguel and Valencia's research shifts towards more recent forms of racism and ethnocentrism against Chicanas/os in the educational institution. They discuss how the unconstitutionality of segregated schools led to more covert forms of discrimination, such as "dead-end classes...and low level vocational education" (369). In addition, although English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs offer students the tools to transfer their knowledge to English, San Miguel and Valencia acknowledge how language classes are a type of segregation. This segregation exists under the guise of entering mainstream classes,

where Chicanas/os assimilate to American society through ethnocentric, nativist, and xenophobic tactics by either intentionally or ignorantly misplacing students (378).

In some cases, depending upon both the parents' level of ability to communicate with the school district and the racial and ethnic markers of their child, a student may be placed in ESL or bilingual education despite his/her English skills. Other cases involve educational administrators making assumptions of English proficiency based solely upon an individual's name. The placement in bilingual education programs based solely on racial and ethnic markers impedes the educational processes because, for example, elective courses normally reserved for academic growth in individual fields are replaced with mandatory language courses.

Corroborating San Miguel and Valencia's findings, Rose's (1994) discussion of personal experiences describes how educators separate students into either college preparatory or vocational tracks, in addition to determining their grade levels. From an early age, the specific classes that the school staff places Chicanas/os into shape the students' developmental and intellectual progress. At times these groupings are based upon the discretion of teachers and counselors, but are usually determined by the performances of the students on various institutional, state, and federal tests. However, the decisions of faculty and staff and the structure of the placement exams set certain students up for failure that occur in two ways. First, a self-fulfilling prophecy arises when educators emphasize the failures of a group instead of acknowledging their obstacles and achievements, which can decrease students' motivation to perform well.

Second, testing Spanish-speaking, limited English proficiency students, and bilingual students in English may lead to scores that do not reflect their intellect.

In addition to supporting the work of San Miguel and Valencia and Rose in terms of language and testing, Kush (1996) brings in the concept of negative scholastic attitudes. He explains how cognitive styles differ between ethnic groups, leading to various behavioral patterns in the educational institution. Due to the focus that Chicanas/os place on family and community, many faculty and staff fall into the fallacy that Chicanas/os value their education less than White students.

Another way that racism and ethnocentrism occur in the educational institution is through funding inequalities and structural neglect. Connell (1998) explains how “dilapidated buildings” result in an inferior education in many schools that serve large populations of Chicana/o students (68). This demonstrates how “equal access to education was not a fundamental right under the U.S. constitution,” making it difficult for federal and state lawsuits to fight inequitable educational funding (69). Although separate schools are no longer permissible by law, this advanced form of racism and ethnocentrism allows unequal schools to continue to exist. These educational conditions maintain the limited opportunities that students encounter when applying to colleges and employment positions. Despite the fact that Connell found improvement in achievement by Chicanas/os, she emphasizes the fact that “financial inequities and racial [and ethnic] sequestration” remain problematic (72).

There are an indefinite number of ways that racial and ethnic profiling exist in the educational institution. Whether shaping student-to-student relations, influencing

classroom structure and assessment, or interfering with administrative access, racial and ethnic markers can affect all levels of the school system. Based upon the concepts and previous patterns found in the research included in the literature review, I decided to interview a group of Chicana/o students in regards to their perceptions of how racial and ethnic identity influenced their interpersonal relationships in high school. This thesis may open the doors for future analysis of Chicanas'/os' school experiences by revealing what areas need the most attention in defining and preventing racial and ethnic discrimination.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Existing research focuses on the quantitative analysis of racialized qualities, emphasizing populations and percentages while generally failing to look into the individual causes, conditions, and perceptions surrounding racism and ethnocentrism. Although previous analyses succeed in showing the connections between educational achievement and racial features, they fail to exhibit how ethnic identity is related to discrimination in society and/or the educational institution.

My research investigated the perceptions of individual Chicanas/os looking at if and how racial and ethnic identities influenced the quality of their high school educational experience. In addition, the research asked people to identify the different physical and behavioral markers that people used to identify them, and how they responded to the possibility of differential treatment.

In order to allow individuals to express their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences in detail and with accuracy, this research relied upon qualitative data collection and analysis. To accomplish this, I asked Chicana/o undergraduate students to participate in a two-part interview that aimed to capture their understanding of racial and ethnic influences in their high school experiences. Conducting these interviews allowed for an in-depth investigation into the recent experiences of Chicanas/os who can speak of their own personal lives.

Finding Respondents

The participants in the study are Chicana/o undergraduates from various Chicana/o-focused classes and organizations on the San José State University campus. All of the respondents were Chicanas/os in order to ensure that the individuals of marginalized racial and ethnic identity are provided the opportunity to voice their personal experiences. This follows one of the main principles of Chicana/o Studies research – to give voice to ignored, silenced, and oppressed individuals.

The reason for selecting university students relates to the combination of maturity and achievement. Previous research of racial and ethnic identity acquisition (Ocampo, Bernal, and Knight, 1993) found that undergraduate students have reached an age where they possess the ability to understand how people perceive various racial and ethnic cues. In addition, university students have demonstrated their ability to work through the educational system and may have learned the skills to critically analyze how their racial and ethnic markers influence their relations with society. The participants were limited to undergraduates in order to control the educational level of the respondents.

Participants were sought in Chicana/o Studies classes and Chicana/o and Latina/o organizations on campus. The classes were chosen through the Spring 2001 Schedule of Classes and the organizations through the Fall 2000 Student Organization Directory. Although the people enrolled in the courses and attending meetings came from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, the focus of the lecture and reading material on Chicana/o community issues resulted in comparably higher enrollment numbers among Chicana/o students. Utilizing classes and organizations to identify participants was

limiting in that there are Chicanas/os that voluntarily decide not to enroll in race-/ethnic-based classes or associate with race-/ethnic-based organizations. Nevertheless, identifying potential participants through these means was necessary in that the students involved tended to be comfortable enough to acknowledge their racial and ethnic identity. Furthermore, these classes and organizations were used as opposed to selecting individual Chicanas/os from public spaces or through the campus directory to avoid the possibilities of mistaking Filipinas/os, Latinas/os, or other individuals as Chicanas/os based simply upon their racial and/or ethnic markers and because these would be problematic.

Students in six classes offered by the Mexican American Studies Department were asked to participate in the research project. Of the twelve organizations that were approached, many did not actively meet or had very few members. Four organizations were appropriate for and interested in the project, but only two were asked to participate due to timing conflicts between my personal academic schedule and the meetings of the other two groups.

To prevent discomfort that students may have experienced in hearing about research on racism and ethnocentrism, I utilized the assistance of the professors and key contact people of the organizations. These individuals provided an introduction, allowing the Chicana/o undergraduates to feel more comfortable with my presence and with signing up to participate in the interviews. The same general five-minute presentation was given to each class and organization to discuss the research, my interest, and the risks involved to the students (Appendix A).

In five of the six classes, a sign-up sheet was passed around the room to collect the personal information of the potential participants. In the remaining class and with both organizations, small cards were distributed to fill out and to return. The sign-up sheets may have prevented some level of participation due to students' anxiety about the possible reactions of classmates upon finding their names associated with the research. This was the principal reason behind the shift from using the sheets to the cards. Combining the students on the sign-up sheets, the information cards, and a handwritten note, a total of 31 undergraduate Chicanas/os demonstrated an interest to be interviewed. However, after a series of phone calls and e-mails, only 16 students remained in contact to set up interview appointments.

Due to the fact that three of the 16 students failed to show at their scheduled appointment and were unable to commit to rearranging another meeting, the research presented relies on the responses of the remaining thirteen Chicana/o undergraduates. Although these thirteen participants have important experiences to share, the small size of the pool constrains the possible impact of the research. There is no certainty that the interviews of the thirteen reflected those that may have occurred with the entire group of 31 participants. Similarly, whether thirteen or 31 students were interviewed, there is no assurance that their high school experiences would reflect those of the general Chicana/o population. Still, the students did represent a diverse set of experiences and perspectives.

All thirteen of the interviews took place in private rooms on the San José State University campus. The interviews lasted between 55 minutes and 2 hours 45 minutes. The average time of the interviews was 1 hour 15 minutes. Although the questions were

administered in English and the majority of the discussion was in English, there were several occasions when Spanglish and Spanish words or expressions were used.

This group of thirteen Chicana/o respondents is limited by the fact that they are undergraduates attending a specific California State University. To create a complete understanding of how the educational institutional experience is influenced by racial and ethnic markers, research would need to address a wider variety of educational contexts and experiences. These include: students who drop out of high school for academic, behavioral, or personal reasons; students who graduate from high school, but choose not to continue their education; students who graduate from high school and want to continue their education, but academic or personal reasons interfere; students who graduate from high school and attend either community college or junior college to earn an A.A., whether as a transition to the university or as an ultimate educational goal; and students who graduate and directly enter the university.

Still, the sample of respondents used in this research met the unique goals of the research project, and were diverse in terms of gender, age, and class. It allowed Chicana/o students (who have achieved a significant degree of educational success and who have chosen classes and organizations that allow them a certain level of comfort in discussing racial and ethnic issues) to share their experiences and opinions of discrimination in high school education. These specific elements of the Chicana/o undergraduate sample are important because they include combining the racial, ethnic, and educational prerequisites, as well as the necessary maturity and well-being.

Pre-Interview Discussion

Prior to the interview, the respondents already had a basic understanding of the research topic from the introduction to their classes and organizations. In addition, before conducting each interview, the students were reminded of the issues involved in the research and their rights as a subject (Appendix B). Supplementary information was presented that covered some of the topics and themes that would be brought up in the interview so that there would be less anxiety. Each respondent was given the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns about the research and the interview before starting.

Interview

In order to understand how self-perceived racial and ethnic features influence the students' experiences in the educational institution, the interviews with the thirteen participants were conducted in a face-to-face, one-on-one setting. These interviews consisted of 34 questions. The questions are divided into four main categories: high school experiences, college preparation, perceptions of racial and ethnic identity, and advice to future generations of Chicana/o scholars in high school and college (Appendix C). With the guide of the respondents' individual answers, these questions were often re-phrased, and probed to get their specific experiences. In addition to expressing the students' perceptions of racial and ethnic identity and discrimination, the information collected from the interviews gives us access to detailed accounts of interpersonal relationships with classmates, teachers, and counselors in high school. These descriptions create a context that allows me to compare my interpretations to the

students' perceptions of the impact of racial and ethnic markers on their interpersonal relationships.

Demographic Questionnaire

In addition to the interview questions directly related to the research questions, the meetings concluded with a section designed to develop an individual context for each interview (Appendix F). Before discussing this final section, the students were reminded of the purpose and the confidentiality of their responses (Appendix E). The information from the demographic questionnaire permits a secondary analysis of the data on racial and ethnic markers and perceptions of discrimination. Taking immigration status, gender, and other social issues into consideration in analyzing the respondents' experiences provided a means to create a more layered critical analysis of the subject.

The information collected in the demographic questionnaire scratches the surface of the many variables that may influence individuals' vulnerability to and perceptions of discrimination. The variables that were included in the questionnaires were childhood nicknames, age, gender, birthplace, date of immigration (if applicable), hometown, educational background, and family history. The students' responses to the demographic questionnaire helped to locate and to begin to understand patterns and phenomena among their answers to the interview questions.

The interview questions and the demographic questionnaire create a wide range of data. To begin to analyze the data, I repeatedly read through the interview transcriptions to identify themes, patterns, and singularities in the Chicanas'/os' stories that I felt were

of direct significance to the research. Once the information was organized, I used the demographic insight to find possible influences on the students' perceptions of race, ethnicity, and their interpersonal relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Answers to the research questions appear in the students' responses to the interview questions. In order to find these answers in the thirteen Chicanas'/os' interviews, I searched for patterns in each of the 34 questions. The focus of the findings is on the participants' responses to the inquiries surrounding their interpersonal relationships in high school and their perceptions of race, ethnicity, and discrimination. In addition to noting the dominant patterns among the participants, there were other interesting patterns, but these were not central to the research questions.

One of the strongest findings in the research was the fact that twelve of the thirteen participants felt that teachers were their favorite people in high school. Despite the various interpersonal student relationships in the classroom, cliques, organizations, and athletics, the participants valued their experiences with teachers more than anyone else. The individual faculty members described in the interviews were not always Chicanas/os, but they all pushed the participants to strive for their higher intellectual abilities, built self-confidence, and helped to organize and to integrate the students' academic and personal lives. The only participant that did not mention teachers as a favorite person in high school was Gerónimo, whose relationship with a janitor at one of his two high schools helped him to cope with various social problems.

The clearest example of the potential teachers have to influence the lives of their students is observed through the case of Ricardo. At Unser High School in Fresno

County, Ricardo's education involved a variety of difficulties. At one point, he landed in juvenile hall and was jailed for gang fights. In school, Ricardo declined invitations to enroll in honors classes because he believed himself to be "too lazy" to complete the heavy workload. A combination of four teachers pulled Ricardo out of his collapse to get his personal and educational priorities on track. An art teacher motivated Ricardo's involvement with MEChA, a history teacher opened his eyes to the need to address social injustices, a mathematics teacher instilled values of respect and discipline that made him "feel better about [himself]," and a language teacher helped to guide him through the applications for college. With the inspiration and assistance of these four teachers, Ricardo "surprised" the faculty, made classmates "jealous," and ignored counselors to become one of only twenty graduates from Unser's class of 114 to attend college.

In addition to the positive influences that the Chicana/o students experienced in high school, two groups of people stood out as crowds that the students wanted to avoid. One of the groups of people that the participants tried to avoid at the high schools was teachers and counselors. Contrary to their appreciation of some members of the faculty and staff, the students also experienced direct and indirect racially and ethnically based discriminatory comments, maintenance of low standards and expectations of intellectual performance, and favoritism for other students by teachers, counselors, librarians, administrators, and security guards on their campuses. These feelings towards faculty and staff often resulted in the participants not taking certain courses, restricting themselves from enrolling in certain classes, and steering clear of the social spaces where they would be most likely to encounter these members of the faculty and staff.

Rosario's interpersonal relationships with teachers and counselors at Blossom High School in Monterey County reflect the conflicts that most of the participants experienced. On several occasions, teachers and librarians confronted Rosario with comments critical of her limited English proficiency. In addition, she felt that counselors scheduled her classes based upon linguistic ability, leaving her in courses that were "not up to [her intellectual] ability." Counselors at Blossom also discouraged Rosario from applying to several universities, telling her that, despite her achievement in honors and AP classes, she was "not college material." Beyond the discrimination experienced by the other participants at the hands of faculty and staff, Ricardo and Gerónimo both discussed personal stories about security officers on their high school campuses that made unjustified accusations and gave unequal punishments to Chicano students.

After learning how counselors pushed the students away from college, it becomes easier to understand why so many of the students avoided the members of their high school faculty and staff. Although some of the participants' teachers shared in the celebration of their hopes to attend various universities, most discouraged their Chicana/o students' dreams of pursuing a higher education. Similar to their teachers' reactions, the responses of counselors was mixed. Only four of the participants mentioned counselors that helped them to work around financial issues and fill out their paperwork. The other nine participants were either discouraged or ignored by their high school counselors. These hindrances included failing to contact potential college students to inform them of their opportunities, limiting students' aspirations for higher education to junior and community colleges, discouraging applications to competitive universities, avoiding

addressing certain questions about the processes and experiences associated with a higher education, withholding information on the availability of scholarships and financial aid, and neglecting to write letters of recommendation. In the majority of these interactions with counselors, the participants expressed their perception that White classmates received extraordinary attention in comparison to their own situations.

Alexei's experiences with his college advising sessions paint a representative portrait of the pattern of discrimination by counselors. Attending Holmes High School in Santa Cruz County, Alexei participated in a variety of academic, athletic, and social endeavors. Despite his outstanding performance in all areas, his counselor overlooked him when approaching the "top 10% of the class." Alexei took it upon himself to meet with the counselor only to be informed that he was "insufficient" for the University of California, the system that he originally intended to apply to. Ignoring his performance in honors and AP classes, Alexei was advised to apply to community colleges. Although these comments initially "stopped [his] motivation" to attend college, Alexei decided to return to his original college plans in order to "prove [the counselor] wrong." The counselor was "surprised that [Alexei] got into UC schools," but offered neither apologies nor congratulations.

The second group of people that the students tried to avoid consisted of Chicanas/os born in the United States or México, depending upon the nationality of the participant in question. Similar to the problems with teachers and counselors at their high schools, nine of the participants discussed the existence of strong tension between foreign- and native-born Chicanas/os. The different labels applied to immigrants

included “Mexicans,” “Mexican Mexicans,” “Mexicanos,” “*sureños*,” and “jaggers.” Chicanas/os that were born and raised in the United States received the designations of “Mexican Americans,” “Chicanos,” “*norteenos*,” and “*pochos*.” The problematic interpersonal relationships between these students played out as conflicting interests in racial- and ethnic-based high school clubs, nativist and xenophobic comments, and violent confrontations.

Both the foreign- and native-born Chicanas/os noted these intergroup conflicts. While most of the participants tended to take one side of the issue over the other, the reactions of Rebeca and Raúl provide unique examples. Rebeca’s involvement with student leadership at Wayne High School in Alameda County placed her in a position to relate to both foreign- and native-born students. Her education and her community participation resulted in “lots of respect for both sides” of the conflict, motivating her efforts to create understanding between the two groups. Taking the opposite approach, Raúl’s disgust at the poor relations between different Chicana/o identity groups at Hardy High School in San Francisco led him to completely avoid other Chicanas/os on campus. Although he participated in the Latino Club to gain a sense of cultural community to make up for the separation from his immediate family, he made sure to avoid the Chicana-/o-designated social spaces. The visibility of associating with other Chicanas/os around the high school campus increased the possibility that students, faculty, or staff would recognize and discriminate against Raúl’s racial and ethnic identity.

In attempting to explain why so many of the Chicanas/os interviewed were mistreated by their classmates, faculty, and staff, it is interesting to observe the patterns

among the participants' perceptions of the markers that identified their racial and ethnic identity. In addition to the general racial cues students emphasized, such as having "dark" and "brown" eyes, hair, and skin, four of the participants specifically referred to the concept of "looking Mexican." Although none of the participants elaborated on what they meant by looking Mexican, they implicitly referred to their dark, Indian features. The only participants who differed from the pattern of identifying eye, hair, and skin colors were the four that claimed to possess no racial markers to offer people at their high school to make judgments. The participants' descriptions of ethnic attributes included accent, last name, Spanish language, political awareness, style of dress, and social cliques. Some of the participants acknowledged how their command of the English language, comparably tall height, green eyes, and light skin deceived many people as to their Chicana/o identity.

Similar to what the participants interpreted as racial and ethnic markers recognizable to the classmates, faculty, and staff at their high schools, patterns also arose in how they perceived their own racial and ethnic identities. These are important because they demonstrate the variations between how individuals view themselves as compared to how they feel they present themselves to other people. In addition to the previously mentioned racial markers, they discussed "typical" body frames and facial structures. These attributes included references to weight, noses, and cheekbones, all of which were noted by the Chicana participants. The specific acknowledgement by the Chicana subjects in regards to their body image supports the concept of the racialized female body. Combined with the stereotypes of the Chicano racial markers, Chicanas experience

additional social pressures resulting from comparisons made between their bodies and the standards of American beauty among women as White, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and thin. In regards to ethnic markers, the participants discussed how cultural value systems, jewelry, religious and indigenous references, social interests, cars, tattoos, and gendered passivity represented their Chicana/o identity.

Elizabeth's description of her ethnic markers demonstrates the complexity of the participants' ethnic self-images. She explained how her awareness of Latin American politics and her participation in sociopolitical movements and campaigns reflected her Chicana identity. In addition, Elizabeth felt that the hand-embroidered designs on her clothing, the recurring imagery of the sun on her possessions, and her references to mythical creation stories were distinctively Chicana.

A central issue in the responses to self-perceived racial conceptualization was seen in Rebeca's description of her racial identity as "*mestiza*." Although other participants acknowledged how light complexion and green eyes confused people attempting to make racial classifications, Rebeca's mention of *mestizaje* explicitly recognized that the racial markers of Chicanas/os extend beyond dark, Indian features. She critiqued what has become the racialized Chicana/o body by stating that "you can't go by stereotypes" to determine someone's identity. Rebeca's comment addressed the wide representations of racial identity and the problems that arise when people use their interpretations of racial markers to make assumptions about an individual's identity and lifestyle.

Throughout the interviews, the participants tended to focus on how faculty and staff members at their high schools utilized their racial and ethnic markers to discriminate against them. Despite their many negative experiences with teachers and counselors, the participants noted that interpersonal relationships with classmates were the primary source of racism and ethnocentrism. These classmates used racial and ethnic cues to organize social cliques, to employ derogatory terms, and to instigate physical and verbal conflicts.

Alexei's experiences with his classmates at Holmes exemplify this pattern of discrimination. When he wore ethnically representative clothing and projected ethnic values, Alexei recalled being referred to as a "beaner" by non-Chicana/o students. Only at the times that he performed the role of football player and dressed in "White-washed" fashions did Alexei feel accepted by his classmates.

Due to the various manners in which classmates, faculty, and staff used racial and ethnic markers to guide their interpersonal relations with Chicana/o students, the participants sometimes felt the need to find ways to cope with or to prevent discriminatory situations. The strategies to cope with racism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice included confronting the individuals discriminating against them, seeking comfort from friends, and converting frustration and disappointment into motivation to excel. Although the participants noted how being recognized as Chicana/o had certain benefits with select friends, teachers, and counselors, the negative aspects of being racially and ethnically identified led eight of the students to choose to associate elsewhere or to inform people of their excessive or ignorant behavior. Gerónimo was the only

subject who resorted to threats and violence in reaction to the treatment he received.

Three of the students claimed that they never did anything to deal with situations involving racial and ethnic bias. They acknowledged that this was due to not being aware of racism and ethnocentrism during high school.

Among the eight participants who reacted outwardly to the discrimination they suffered, David exhibited the most thoughtful reaction to the racism and ethnocentrism. In response to the direct and indirect cases of discrimination that he fell victim to at Landover High School in Santa Clara County, David chose to “educate people from personal experiences at a personal level.” By taking his perpetrators “beyond academia,” he hoped to show them how intellectuals and the media often overlook the experiences of marginalized people and create false and incomplete images.

In many cases of discrimination, victims alter aspects of their oppressed identity to prevent further victimization. None of the participants ever modified their racial identity to prevent discrimination, as some people do by dyeing their hair or wearing colored contact lenses. However, seven of the participants mentioned changing their behavior or appearance to disguise their ethnic identity. These alterations included conscious decisions about what clothing to wear, adjustments in the pronunciation of certain words, walking differently, listening to different music, and negotiating social spaces on their high school campuses.

A solid example of these changes in ethnic markers is seen in Alexei’s ability to negotiate multiple situations. When socializing with his Chicana/o friends, Alexei felt free to behave, to dress, and to say how and what he chose. However, in the presence of

White classmates, faculty, and staff, he acknowledged that people of color need to “act differently depending upon the environment.” As opposed to understanding his actions as preventing racism and ethnocentrism, Alexei interpreted the variations in his behavior as a simple differentiation between “professional and social” interpersonal relationships.

Despite the experiences described, the racial and ethnic markers noted, and the efforts made to avoid conflict, six of the participants perceived that neither race nor ethnicity played a role in the quality of their interpersonal relationships in high school. All of these six participants admitted to either witnessing discrimination against classmates or acknowledging the potential for discrimination against themselves under different social circumstances. Nevertheless, all of them also maintained that their personal experiences were free of racism and ethnocentrism. Two of these six participants believed that great progress has been made in the fight against racial and ethnic discrimination, and that Chicanas/os claiming otherwise are simply “looking for someone to blame” for their own lack of motivation, intellect, and self-control. Henceforth, the six participants that did not perceive discrimination will be referred to as the “Unaffected group” group due to the fact that their comments and experiences acknowledge discrimination, despite their decision not to voice their personal victimization.

The other seven of the thirteen participants perceived racial and ethnic markers as playing a significant role in the quality of their interpersonal relationships in high school. All of these participants felt that the poor treatment that Chicanas/os receive in high school is influenced by differences in socioeconomic class that hide the degree of racism

and ethnocentrism that exist. They believe that Chicanas/os who perceive an absence of racial and ethnic discrimination are actually misreading the classism they experience. These individuals see an environment of educational equality, free from racism and ethnocentrism. Henceforth, the seven participants that perceived discrimination in their interpersonal relations will be referred to as the “Affected group” due to the fact that they were able to speak openly about recognizing their experiences as victims of interpersonal discrimination. The differences between the Unaffected group and the Affected group groups will become the central point of the analysis of the thirteen participants after this discussion of the initial findings.

When given the opportunity to list factors other than race and ethnicity that may have influenced their educational experiences, eleven of the thirteen participants mentioned socioeconomic class and five mentioned gender. Similar to the Affected group’s understanding of how class issues cloud the perceptions of individuals who perceive equality within high school structure, these eleven participants described how family financial priorities and the need to work to help support the household negatively affected high school experiences. These demands took time and energy away from studies, while limited resources affected their ability to do their schoolwork (i.e.- not possessing a computer or graphing calculator) and prevented participation in many academic, athletic, and social activities. The five participants that discussed sexism as influencing the quality of interpersonal relationships in high school specifically addressed concerns about the lack of “respect” given to women in education and the assumptions of more effective uses of a woman’s life. Two of these five participants were Chicanos

preoccupied with the impact of gender on their female counterparts. Less common responses included references to body type, intellectual level, generational status, sexuality, religion, extra-curricular involvement, and social anxiety. In many cases, these answers indirectly related to race and ethnicity. For example, when discussing racial markers, Elizabeth mentioned that the shortness and heaviness of her body type were part of her Mexican heritage. Alexei's recognition of how his generational status affected his interpersonal relationships acknowledged how ethnic markers tend to be more prominent among Chicanas/os with limited experiences and social connections in the United States. Allana's reference to religious influences on her high school experiences suggests that the Catholic identity often associated with Chicanas/os impacted her interpersonal relationships. In the case of Raúl, his discomfort as an immigrant struggling to meet the cultural and linguistic expectations of American society may suggest an anxiety about being victimized by racist or ethnocentric classmates, faculty, and staff at the high school.

In comparison to the degree to which racial and ethnic identity played a role in their interpersonal relationships in high school, five participants believed that ethnicity and socioeconomic class had equal impact. These students recognized that the influence of different individual identities depended upon the social context. In addition, they noted that discrimination based upon ethnicity and socioeconomic class was manifested in different ways. Of the remaining eight students, four viewed socioeconomic class as most important and four viewed ethnicity as most important. Other than David's analysis of "colorism," his understanding of discrimination based completely upon an individual's skin color, there was no mention of racial markers as being a significant impact on the

interpersonal relationships that the participants maintained with classmates, faculty, and staff at their high schools.

The general findings of the interviews demonstrate that all of the participants acknowledged the existence of racism and ethnocentrism against Chicanas/os in high school. Although only seven of the students felt that they had been victims of discrimination based upon classmates', faculty's, and staff's interpretations of their racial and ethnic markers, the remaining six noted either witnessing discrimination against other Chicanas/os or recognizing the potential for discrimination against themselves. As suggested, the Affected group clearly points to the central roles of racial and ethnic discrimination in their school lives citing specific instances. Given that their interviews suggested some level of racism and ethnocentrism, it becomes essential to understand the Unaffected group's feelings that racial and ethnic identity had no influence on their interpersonal relationships. The rest of this chapter focuses on the Unaffected group.

The Unaffected Group

The principal objective of this research was to determine the extent to which Chicanas/os experience racial and ethnic discrimination in their interpersonal relations at high school. By conducting interviews with individual participants, I hoped that I could utilize personal perceptions to assess the state of racism and ethnocentrism. The seven participants in the Affected group specifically acknowledged the impact of racial and ethnic identity on the quality of their high school education and interpersonal relationships. They observed how the racism and ethnocentrism that they experienced

could have affected their chances to graduate from high school and to get into college by interfering with their grades, the classes they took, their behavioral profile, and their understanding of the opportunities, benefits, and processes related to receiving a higher education.

The six participants in the Unaffected group felt that race and ethnicity were insignificant factors in shaping their interpersonal relationships with classmates, faculty, and staff. Interestingly, various aspects of the Unaffected group's descriptions of high school life seem to contradict their perceptions. The experiences of all six Chicanas/os illustrate how the interpretations of racial and ethnic markers on the part of classmates, faculty, and staff in high school affected their education.

The People

The six participants in the Unaffected group represent the broad spectrum of Chicana/o identity. The group consisted of men and women, foreign- and native-born, and individuals possessing a variety of racial and ethnic markers. In addition to having the same range of ages as the Affected group, the participants in the Unaffected group come from both Northern and Southern California.

Eva was born, raised, and educated in a white-dominated school district in Santa Clara County. During her interview, she focused on the issues surrounding socioeconomic influences on her high school experiences. Eva described her high school as consisting entirely of middle- and upper-class families. She maintained that the invisibility of classism led many people to pinpoint discrimination on the visible features

of racial and ethnic identity. Despite her acknowledgement that comparatively “light skin” enabled her to blend in with the White students, Eva had difficulty in identifying her other racial and ethnic markers. She hesitantly placed a “maybe” before listing any possible attributes reflecting her race or ethnicity.

Eva noted that she was offered neither the information nor the opportunity for placement in special academic programs. She was neither educated on the value of college preparatory classes nor encouraged by teachers or counselors in “any way, shape, or form.” Although Eva did not recognize the covert discrimination that apparently resulted in her lack of educational opportunities, she recognized that the quality of her interpersonal relations at “another school would [have been] different.” In addition, she noted that if her “skin was a lot darker,” her experiences may not have been perceived as unmarked by racial and ethnic identity. Eva’s comments demonstrate how, despite her declaration that there was no interpersonal discrimination against her at Missionville, she acknowledged the problems with racism and ethnocentrism in other high schools and for people with more visible racial and ethnic markers.

Born and raised in Los Angeles County, Allana attended the Latina-/o-dominated Hemmet High School. She never mentioned any racism or ethnocentrism directed at her, but Allana noted several occasions when counselors treated classmates and friends poorly based upon their Chicana/o identity. She stated that her green eyes and broad nose structure “threw people off” when they tried to identify her racial identity. Allana noted that these racially deceptive cues helped to protect her from experiencing any discrimination. Apart from mentioning the misleading attributes, she had trouble

identifying her Chicana racial and ethnic markers. Instead, Allana discussed how people “adapt to [their] experiences” after being in an environment for so long. She recognized the potential for racism and ethnocentrism to become normalized when an individual accepts discrimination in everyday living conditions without acknowledging his/her victimization. Despite her enrollment in advanced academic coursework and courses provided by the community college, Allana did not think it unusual for teachers and counselors to tell her that she was “not qualified” to enter the honors or AP programs at Hemmet.

Similar to Allana, Miguel witnessed racism and ethnocentrism against other classmates at Ventura High School in Santa Bárbara County, but failed to perceive the discrimination against him. He specifically acknowledged that the discrimination still exists, but is “less pronounced” than it was historically. Miguel also mentioned that the level of racism and ethnocentrism would vary with the “politics of location,” depending upon the population of Chicanas/os at a given high school. Miguel was unable to list any specific racial markers that classmates, faculty, or staff could have used to identify him as Chicano. Only after attending a college camp at the University of California, Santa Bárbara to examine his interests in civil engineering was he aware of the way race and ethnicity influence interpersonal relations. However, Miguel did not apply this awareness to his experiences in high school. Although he noted the institutionalized discrimination of the school district in racially segregating the two local high schools, Miguel did not perceive the interpersonal discrimination in the gang fights or the counselor’s attempt to place him in ESL.

More overt than the discrimination in the interpersonal relationships of Eva, Allana, and Miguel, Alexei discussed numerous ways that his racial and ethnic identity shaped his high school experiences. Nevertheless, he maintained that race and ethnicity were not factors in the quality of his relationships with classmates, faculty, or staff at Holmes. In fact, he argued that students who claim to be victims of discrimination are “copouts.” Alexei emphasized that discrimination is simply “an excuse not to perform” and an opportunity to “blame [failure] on other people.” Counselors and teachers tried to place him in bilingual education, prevented him from applying to universities, and left him without “motivation, ideas, or direction afforded to White students.” Although Alexei also recalled being referred to as a “beaner” by his classmates, he stated that some people thought he was of Russian heritage. Alexei had similar difficulties to Miguel in identifying his racial markers, insisting that his football skills and Russian name helped to “white-wash” him in the highly Chicana/o town of Waterfront. Earning a degree in Management Information Systems, Alexei mentioned that his salary in the technological field was already quite prestigious. He also noted that, within a matter of years, he would possess an annual income in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Although Raúl stated that there was no racism or ethnocentrism in his interpersonal relationships at Hardy, he acknowledged that discrimination exists. Similar to Miguel’s acknowledgement of institutionalized discrimination, Raúl believed that any favoritism at his high school must have occurred “during the filtering process in the admissions office.” Even though Hardy is a public school, it has an admissions policy based upon individuals’ potential to succeed in a competitive and accelerated learning

environment. Raúl's achievements in architecture, which also influenced his current study in graphic design, helped him to remain competitive. While outwardly claiming to have avoided racism and ethnocentrism, he mentioned several ways that race and ethnicity shaped his interpersonal relationships at Hardy. To begin with, Raúl avoided other Chicanas/os to prevent teachers, counselors, and security from associating him "with gangs." Raúl mentioned his efforts to steer clear of "social spaces out of fear" that he would be either labeled as Chicano or verbally attacked by people disapproving of Chicanos. In order to keep from being identified as a Chicano, he went so far as to avoid wearing any clothing that may have had ethnic implications. Raúl also acknowledged how his dark skin color was "heightened" in the context of the many whites and Asian Pacific Islanders at Hardy. Combined with his accent, Raúl noted that he could be a target for racist and ethnocentric classmates, faculty, and staff.

Raúl focused most of his interview on the "social anxiety" that he suffered from during the first few years of high school. He stated that a combination of linguistic and cultural adjustments prevented him from feeling "connected to other people." Although Raúl interpreted his social anxiety as "outweighing" the impact of his racial and ethnic identity, he ignored the ways that his fears of discrimination led to the "self-inflicted" alienation that he experienced in high school. Raúl noted that his shyness interfered with the quality of his interpersonal relationships "more than anything." His social anxiety and subsequent marginalization may have been unconscious defenses against the racism and ethnocentrism that he innately knew existed at the high school. For example, although Raúl perceived his social anxiety as separate from racial and ethnic identity, his

experiences reveal an individual trying to avoid the effects of racial and ethnic discrimination to the point of minimizing social contact and restricting racial and ethnic associations.

Although Rosario maintained that she never personally experienced racism or ethnocentrism at Blossom High School in Monterey County, she admitted that racism exists. Rosario believed that discrimination is something that people could “overcome” through hard work and determination. Refusing to label herself a victim, Rosario failed to identify classmates, faculty, and staff as perpetrators of racism and ethnocentrism despite their negative sentiment against Spanish-speakers and disregard for her college plans. Nevertheless, she stated that “it’s sad” that such people are employed by the school district and that “they shouldn’t be at the school.”

Rosario expressed similar feelings to Raúl in regards to marginalization at her high school. However, as opposed to Raúl’s development of social anxiety, she maintained a visible presence with the attitude that she was “not a victim.” Despite the discouragement and disrespect that she received from classmates, faculty, and staff, Rosario stated that she was “not able to comprehend” the implications of the racist and ethnocentric interpersonal relationships. She blamed this on the fact that, coming “from a different culture, [she] didn’t have eyes to see” the discrimination that occurred in high school. In addition to her direct reference to how being an immigrant affected her perceptions of racial and ethnic identity, Rosario also focused on how her inability to communicate in English and her strong Spanish accent led to the worst conflicts with

people in school. This included the students that called her names and the librarian and substitute teacher that yelled at her for not speaking better English.

Although Eva, Allana, and Miguel's descriptions of discrimination are less apparent than those of Alexei, Raúl, and Rosario, all six of the participants in the Unaffected group experienced some level of overt and/or covert discrimination. These kinds of experiences with overt and/or covert discrimination were shared by the Affected group. In comparing the perceptions of the Affected group and the Unaffected group, I wondered if any specific factors contributed to the six students' commitment to the idea that they had an equal educational opportunity and needed to work hard enough to succeed in high school.

The Factors

A careful analysis of the Unaffected and Affected groups revealed five factors that existed among Chicanas/os in the Unaffected group that were absent from the experiences of those in the Affected group.

One of the factors among the six participants in the Unaffected group relates to the influence of their nationality on their schooling experiences. Both of the immigrants in the interviews were in the Unaffected group and had entered high school within two years of coming to the United States. Raúl migrated at the age of twelve years and Rosario migrated at the age of 14 years.

Although the American-born Chicana/o participants varied in their perceptions of racism and ethnocentrism, there was a clear variable that created the differentiation of

their opinions. In addition to the fact that both participants born in México were in the Unaffected group, all four participants that were born, raised, and educated in one small town were included in the Unaffected group. Eva, Alexei, Allana, and Miguel all lived their childhood and youth in a confined area, never receiving the opportunity to become familiar with or to reside in a different community or environment. These four also happened to be the same four participants that could not think of any racial or ethnic markers that could have made their Chicana/o identity known to classmates, faculty, or staff at their high schools.

Apart from the influence of where the participants were born and raised, it is interesting to note that both of the students studying the hard sciences are in the Unaffected group. Alexei is in management information systems and Miguel is in civil engineering. All of the other participants in the Unaffected group and the Affected group were majoring and/or minoring in the social sciences and the humanities.

Another common factor among some of the participants in the Unaffected group is the inclusion of all three of the students who lived in communities, grew up in conditions, and held aspirations of middle- and upper-class lifestyles. Eva lived in a wealthy neighborhood in Missionville, Raúl grew up in a household with two doctors, and Alexei always held high aspirations of his future financial situation. The references to and pre-occupation with comparably privileged socioeconomic status strongly influenced the responses of these three students.

The last factor that proved unique to the Unaffected group was the experience of being mistaken for another racial and/or ethnic identity. Although several members of

the Affected group discussed the difficulty that some people had in placing their racial and/or ethnic markers, they were never actually mistaken for another identity group. For example, on several occasions during their interviews, Alexei noted that classmates, faculty, and staff thought that he was of Russian heritage and Allana was mistaken as both an African American and a *mulata*.

The participants in both the Affected group and the Unaffected group shared a variety of interpersonal relationships with their classmates, faculty, and staff. Although their perceptions of the impact of discrimination on their lives differ, an analysis of the findings may help us to understand new ways to prevent and to deal with racism and ethnocentrism in high school. This may occur through an understanding of the possible influences of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and location on the students' experiences and perceptions of discrimination. To analyze the potential effects of these identities, the next chapter will discuss the relationships between the Chicana/o students' thoughts and experiences and their race, ethnicity, class, gender, and location. The information derived from this analysis may help with prevention and coping by giving us an idea of how various identity factors tend to affect individuals' interpersonal relationships in high school.

In addition, an understanding of the five factors unique to the Unaffected group may also explain why the six participants came to separate assessments. To analyze these, I try to conceptualize how each of the factors may shape the perceptions of the Chicana/o students to the point of expressing the belief that they remain personally unaffected by racism and ethnocentrism. This analysis may be helpful to researchers and

administrators in assessing discrimination in schools by showing the biases that influence how students perceive their condition.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

The findings reveal two primary areas that need to be analyzed in depth to help answer the research questions. The first is how race, ethnicity, class, gender, and the politics of location may influence the interpersonal relationships of Chicanas/os in high school. The second is the need for a model that explains the differences between the Affected group and the Unaffected group by exploring the five factors that may affect students' analysis of the role of racial and ethnic discrimination in their lives.

Race, Ethnicity, Class, Gender, and Location

The participants' responses to internal group conflict among Chicanas/os show how racial and ethnic communities' ability to turn discrimination inwards is as dangerous and as powerful as the ways that the dominant society and other people of color formulate racism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice. Instead of finding support from people of the same background that sympathize with common historic experiences of racism, ethnocentrism, nativism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination, the tension between foreign- and native-born Chicanas/os reinforces the negative stereotypes of their racial and ethnic identity.

The counselors' beliefs that a university education would be a waste of time to most of the participants reinforces stereotypes about Chicanas/os as poor achievers with lower educational aspirations. Even with their high GPAs, advanced courses, and

competitive national test scores, the Chicanas/os interviewed were labeled “non-college material.” While most of the participants described their experiences without reflecting critically on them, David specifically mentioned the stereotypical images of the “un-ambitious Mexican” and how counselors pushed students into trade schools. Although select faculty, staff, and family members combined with self-motivation to prepare most of the students for their applications and experiences with junior colleges, community colleges, and/or the university, the fact remains that a variety of overt and covert forms of discrimination against Chicanas/os interfere with their learning about and pursuing a higher education.

The poor relations with teachers, counselors, librarians, security officers, and other classmates resulted in a variety of intellectual, emotional, and psychological effects upon the individuals. The combination of positive and negative experiences surrounding racial and ethnic identity influences Chicanas’/os’ decisions regarding possible defensive strategies in their high schools. Based upon the participants’ responses, it appeared that the main factor in whether or not to take action to prevent additional discrimination was the potential cost of sacrificing the advantages associated with expressing their identity (i.e. – Chicana/o teacher-student relations, participation in clubs/organizations).

Although they made no attempts to alter their racial markers, the participants mentioned altering multiple aspects of their ethnic markers: styles of dress and walk, pronunciation of English, formulating separate social spheres with distinct attitudes and behaviors, changing musical preferences, and avoiding specific social cliques in their high schools.

The experiences of the seven female participants differed from that of the six male participants in several ways. As a group, the majority of the participants mentioned the role of family members in motivating them to complete high school and apply to college. Looking specifically at the Chicanas interviewed, all seven made direct references to their mothers. For example, Eva expressed the desire not “to end up like [her] mother.” Elizabeth’s mother advised her that a college education would allow her the independence to “never depend on a man.” Marisol reflected upon her mother’s regrets at “not completing college.” Allana discussed growing up watching her “mother’s life without a college degree.” Rosario wanted to avoid having “the same life [her] mom had.” Although their responses do not directly relate to the role of race and ethnicity in the quality of interpersonal relationships in high school, they demonstrate the unique educational influences for Chicanas. In addition, the observations show how women are overcoming the gendered layers of discrimination that they carry with their racial and ethnic identities.

In comparison to the Chicano students, the Chicanas were more aware of racialized body image. Elizabeth and Marisol expressed the most direct links between gender and racial identity. They noted the importance of how several racial markers became associated with Chicana femininity: hair texture, length, and color as straight, long, thick “jet-black”; body type of big thighs, thick waists, and short frames; and rounded faces revolving around “smaller eyes” and a “broad nose.”

While the primary gender issue raised by the female participants was their mothers’ educational experiences and aspirations for their daughters, the male

participants expressed concern about gang affiliation. Alexei mentioned how he specifically avoided certain friends inside the classroom because their attitudes and behaviors would affect how the teachers treated him. Raúl described his caution around social spaces to make sure that he was never associated with the Mexican gangs at his high school because he did not want a tarnished reputation. Gerónimo and Ricardo discussed situations where Chicano students were given more severe punishment for misbehavior and violence on the high school campus. Both felt that these measures were taken by White administrators and security officers in order to employ fear tactics as an attempt to control perceived gang tension. Miguel discussed how local law officials and security officers would profile him and his friends inside of the bookstore and in the parking lot. David was the only male who failed to mention gangs, but admitted adjusting his *tejano* accent and *pachuco* walk, in addition to avoiding Dickies, Ben Davis and Lugs apparel often associated with Chicano youth gangs. Although some Chicanas also belong to gangs, the fact that high school classmates, faculty, and staff appear preoccupied with both the possibility and reality of Chicano gang members demonstrates the unique racial and ethnic discrimination that Chicanos experience in their interpersonal relationships.

Regardless of whether the participants grew up in Northern or Southern California, being raised in a sheltered environment may impact the students' ability to perceive racial and ethnic discrimination. Without anything with which to compare their experiences, none of these four participants knew better treatment existed; without a basis to evaluate the quality of their lifestyle, educational and otherwise, these participants

normalize the discrimination that they encountered in high school. This may have prevented them from acknowledging the extent of the racism and ethnocentrism that they endured in high school. In addition, it is harder to resist the dominant way of thinking in a small community because challenges to the system may draw unwanted attention and consequences.

The Five Factors at Play

As previously discussed, all thirteen of the participants either directly or indirectly acknowledged that both racism and ethnocentrism against Chicanas/os continue to exist in their various California high schools. The distinguishing feature between the Affected group and the Unaffected group lies in the fact that the seven participants in the Affected group are defined by their ability to perceive and to acknowledge the role of racial and ethnic identity in the quality of their interpersonal relationships during high school. Despite this major difference, students from both groups discussed an array of common opinions and experiences: positive relationships with some teachers; negative experiences with Chicanas/os, teachers, and counselors; neglect by counselors in preparation for college; perceptions of possible racial and ethnic markers; conceptualizations of racial and ethnic identity; measures taken to prevent discrimination; efforts made to deal with discrimination; and understandings of alternative influences on their interpersonal relationships. Participants from both groups also represented a variety of individual identity traits: men and women, between the ages of 20 and 30 years, attending high

schools across the state of California, and possessing an assortment of phenotypes and ethnic identities.

So what is it about the six students from the Unaffected group that creates their belief that there is no connection between their racial and ethnic identity and the quality of their interpersonal relationships during high school? Five factors remained unique to the participants in the Unaffected group: being born in México; being born, raised, and educated in a limited geographic area; studying in the hard sciences; possessing obvious middle- and upper-class childhoods or aspirations; and having been mistaken for a different racial and/or ethnic identity. All six of the Chicanas/os in the Unaffected group adhere to *at least one* of these sub-groupings.

For Raúl and Rosario, both of whom spent over half of their lives in México before migrating to the United States, language barriers and their accents proved to be the major influence on their interpersonal relationships. The impact of language in shaping their educational experiences shows how ethnicity played an important role, directly and indirectly, on the quality of their education. Part of Raúl and Rosario's difficulty in identifying the discrimination may be due to the variation in conceptualizations of race and ethnicity in Mexican culture as compared to American culture. In addition, having less time to assimilate to the linguistic and cultural expectations of the dominant society in comparison to their native-born Chicana/o counterparts, Raúl and Rosario may have realized that addressing issues of discrimination would hold back their progress in integration and gaining acceptance.

With the exception of the two foreign-born participants, the four other Chicanas/os from the Unaffected group were all born, raised, and educated in a confined community. Similar to the way that various linguistic and ideological factors associated with first generation Chicanas/os affected how Raúl and Rosario perceived their high school experiences, Eva, Alexei, Allana, and Miguel were influenced by their limited social space. Although they lived in different towns with distinct demographics, they shared common experiences. In contrast, the seven participants who expressed perceptions of racial and ethnic identity as significantly affecting their high school experiences either moved across states/counties/towns or traveled outside of their hometown to attend high school. The fact that the seven participants in the Affected group were exposed to multiple environments allowed them the opportunity to contextualize their hometown experiences. By comparing the different social spaces, these students were able to determine the quality of their interpersonal relationships in high school.

In addition to where the six participants were born and raised, the disciplines that they chose to study may also influence how they perceive their interpersonal relationships. White males have traditionally dominated the hard sciences. In the last few decades, Asians Americans and women have slowly begun to change the racial, ethnic, and gendered patterns in these professional fields. However, African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinas/os remain significantly underrepresented in the hard sciences and technology. The other participants' majors and minors all fall into the social sciences and humanities: Political Science, Social Science, Sociology, and Spanish.

These soft sciences tend to focus on interpersonal relations and investigations of human condition and culture. The fact that both of the participants involved in the hard sciences and technology did not perceive racial and ethnic identity as significant to their education may reflect the shift in ethnic value systems often required to gain acceptance by mainstream society.

Similar to how their academic focus affects their perceptions of interpersonal relationships, the socioeconomic privileges of some of the participants also created a subgroup. Several of the participants in the Unaffected group clearly expressed either middle- and upper-class upbringings or aspirations. Although the presence of class status and aspirations may be important in understanding how students perceive racism and ethnocentrism, there is not enough information to make a general statement. Nevertheless, I believe that there is importance to the socioeconomic factor; otherwise there would have been individuals with middle- and upper-class upbringings or aspirations in the group of Affected students.

The last factor that distinguished the Unaffected group from the Affected group was the fact that Alexei was mistaken for a member of a different racial and/or ethnic group. As previously noted, he experienced a racial and ethnic misidentification as a Russian American. This recurring confusion not only served to prevent additional differential treatment because people perceived him as belonging to the White majority, but also appeared to affect his racial self-perception. Although he claimed to have no physical cues to associate him with the Chicano identity, I considered Alexei to be one of the darkest-featured participants in the group of thirteen interviewees. These two aspects

could have affected his overall perceptions of racial and ethnic identity, leaving him ignorant of the actual mistreatment that occurred during high school.

No one among the six participants in the Unaffected group felt they had experienced racial and/or ethnic discrimination. Nevertheless, they all directly and/or indirectly described ways that racism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice existed in their high school environments and targeted their racial and/or ethnic identity groups. Their beliefs could be molded simply by the fact that the discrimination that they witnessed against friends and family was far more severe than their own, leaving them to dismiss their victimization. In comparison to the participants of the Affected group, the fact that these factors are limited to participants associated with the Unaffected group may represent the students' efforts to survive in the hostile climate created by the classmates, faculty, and staff at their high schools. By ignoring and/or denying the impact of discrimination on their interpersonal relationships and academic functions, the participants of the Unaffected group may be able to focus on their accomplishments as opposed to being distracted by the pains and frustrations that often result from racism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of the research were to determine whether or not individual Chicanas/os perceived racial and ethnic identity as influencing their interpersonal relationships with high school classmates, teachers, and counselors and the impact that racism and ethnocentrism have on the educational experiences of Chicanas/os in high school. As discussed throughout the findings and analysis, 54% of the participants felt that race and ethnicity were significant factors and 46% felt them to be personally insignificant. Although only half of the participants interviewed perceived the significance of their racial and ethnic identity markers in their interpersonal relationships in high school, the most important aspect of the research to consider is the fact that all thirteen of the individuals experienced and/or witnessed discrimination and suggested the conscious and unconscious impact of race and ethnicity in their lives. This demonstrates that, whether or not racism and ethnocentrism are perceived as directly affecting individuals, they continue to affect both high school performance and collegiate aspirations, not to mention life chances. Furthermore, the possibility that those who did not acknowledge the roles of race and ethnicity in their schooling may be doing that as a survival strategy suggests that even they may be deeply affected. These situations appear to exist regardless of racial or ethnic presentation, geographic location, socioeconomic status, generational status, or gender.

The participants in the Unaffected group explained the tension between Chicanas/os and the educational institution in several ways. They emphasized their hard work, determination, and motivation as factors enabling them to compete and to succeed in the American meritocracy. The Unaffected group also pointed towards laziness and disinterest as possible bases for the racial and ethnic discrimination that some Chicana/o students perceive in their interpersonal relationships in high school. The participants that believed racial and ethnic identity to be significant to the quality of their educational experiences addressed their counterparts in various manners. Their most common observation was that socioeconomic status has become an increasingly divisive factor in high school institutions. Instead of focusing on how race and ethnicity shape their experiences, most of the Chicanas/os in the Unaffected group believe that other people might be worrying about the ways that their access to resources and materials is affected by their socioeconomic status. In contrast, most of the students in the Affected group feel that Chicanas/os who deny being victims of racism and ethnocentrism are pretending to be complacent in order to gain acceptance in mainstream American society. Whether or not the Chicanas/os perceived themselves to be victims of racism and ethnocentrism in their high schools, they all recognized different ways to try to prevent discrimination.

As described through the interviews, classmates, faculty, and staff all pose different threats to Chicana/o students. Classmates create potential harm to each other primarily through their verbal abuse. Faculty influenced their abilities to acquire knowledge and to achieve recognition for academic performance. Staff members at high schools affect students by enforcing policies in a manner that targets certain students and

by controlling which students are channeled into specialized academic programs.

Although some of the participants were able to avoid some ethnic discrimination through various alterations of speech, movement, dress, and social cliques, there was no effort to alter racial cues to prevent racial discrimination. Nevertheless, all of the participants mentioned either taking action to address the individuals discriminating against them or the desire to have been more assertive and confident to have done so.

Some of the students believed that their classmates' perceptions of racial and ethnic discrimination were tainted by non-racial and non-ethnic sources, misdirection of frustrations and disinterest, or excuses for poor performance. Regardless of their perspectives, the voices of the students need to be heard. They offer a perspective that is often not acknowledged by parents, educators, or administrators. The words of these participants stand as unique testimony to their worldview and experiences.

Implications and Considerations for Future Research

Although this research project was limited to the experiences of thirteen participants, I believe that the findings are significant in pointing to the need to conduct more complex analyses of racial and ethnic discrimination.

To begin with, most sociological definitions of race are problematic when discussing the Chicana/o community because they create a single racialized image of dark hair, dark eyes, and dark skin with wide body and facial structures. The findings demonstrated the variations in hair color, eye color, skin color, body type, and facial features. Despite the fact that the majority of the participants shared some of the racial

markers, the point remains that a racialized Chicana/o identity often proves too diverse to ascribe a specific set of physical cues. In addition to disrupting the stereotypes surrounding the physical markers associated with Chicana/o racial identity, the findings in this research demonstrated insignificance in the variation of racial cues in affecting the level of discrimination experienced and/or perceived by Chicanas/os. Participants in this research who both perceived and experienced discrimination presented a variety of phenotypic representations from light-skinned, European-featured individuals to those who were dark-skinned and Indian-featured. I hope that these findings demonstrate the need for future research to look at the racial and ethnic diversity within the Chicana/o community in order to prevent generalizations and to discover potential patterns among Chicanas/os possessing specific identity attributes.

The students exhibited how ethnic consciousness is not directly connected to an individual's phenotype. Participants of various skin colors and physical features took part in different student clubs and community organizing regardless of their outward appearance. Similarly, the findings demonstrated that the participants' racial markers did not affect their aspirations of acculturating into mainstream society. Although some of the students expressed no desire to acculturate, there existed a variety of skin colors and physical features among the participants wanting to increase their participation outside of the Chicana/o community and to adjust their value systems to adhere to Anglo-oriented definitions of success. I hope these findings motivate researchers to re-evaluate the effectiveness of using hair color, eye color, skin color, and facial structures as the only variables affecting discrimination against Chicanas/os. In addition to showing how other

racial and ethnic markers are used to identify Chicanas/os, this research demonstrated how class, gender, location, and other identities within the broad spectrum of Chicana/o identity may influence how individuals perceive racism and ethnocentrism.

Final Thoughts

Federal and state law and school district policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity. Students' experiences with racial and ethnic markers influencing their interpersonal relationships with classmates, teachers, and counselors may not always fit into the legislation and policy designed to prevent and to punish practices of discrimination. Nevertheless, these attributes shape their educational goals and success, potentially affecting their life chances in the social, economic, and political world.

By investigating how this specific group of Chicana/o participants has experienced the high school education system, I hope that the research opened people's eyes to two main concerns. The first of these is the need to help future Chicana/o students to maneuver through the institution with minimum racial and ethnic discrimination. The second concern that I believe the research addressed was the need to acknowledge the *de facto* discrimination in public institutions so as to motivate the communities to demand stricter legislation and policy to create an equal educational experience for all students, regardless of their race and ethnicity.

Several strategies may be used to help Chicanas/os in the school system. The students themselves may begin by creating support groups or racial/ethnic organizations.

Parents may also become involved by speaking their concerns at PTA meetings, in the administrative offices, and school district meetings. The community may also become involved by creating political alliances to demand change in the local educational structure. Teachers and counselors, whether Chicana/o or not, need to take part in the fight against external and internal sources of discrimination by addressing issues of multiculturalism and diversity inside of the classroom.

As previously discussed, educators and politicians would have most students and parents believe that a combination of laws and policies protect individuals in the public education system. Considering that the participants in this research come from across the state of California and they all described experiences of discrimination, I think their stories speak strongly about the state of racism and ethnocentrism in high schools. Although there were only thirteen Chicanas/os interviewed, the various forms of overt and covert discrimination that the students pointed out are too common to dismiss as coincidence.

While the laws and policies exist, *de facto* discrimination continues in the interpersonal relationships between the Chicana/o students and their classmates, faculty, and staff. The research demonstrates how racism and ethnocentrism are permitted to occur through the segregation of social spaces and the structure of educational programs in high school. Beyond interpersonal relationships, the racism and ethnocentrism that the participants faced in high school included tracking that stunted their intellectual growth and academic potential (i.e. - bilingual education, non-Honors/-Advanced Placement).

It is important to note how, unlike the outright discrimination that plagued Chicana/o students prior to the Civil Right movement, the racism and ethnocentrism that currently exists is often hidden. Looking at the possibility that attempts to assimilate, lack of exposure to better opportunities, the struggle to compete effectively, class privilege, and mistaken racial and ethnic identity contribute to the participants' expressed perceptions of discrimination, the research shows how discrimination in California's public high schools has evolved to a state where Chicanas/os do not and even cannot directly acknowledge their victimization.

The fact that six of the thirteen Chicana/o students did not verbally confirm personal experiences with discrimination in high school does not mean that they have never experienced racism or ethnocentrism, nor should their comments be interpreted to imply that racism and ethnocentrism are non-existent. The survival strategies these students employed suggested the opposite. When the exact people claiming that racial and ethnic identity are insignificant factors in their personal interactions with social institutions make statements demonstrating the negative impact of race and ethnicity in their educational experiences, we need to question the belief that decreasing numbers of students of color are victimized by racism and ethnocentrism in the school system.

Appendix A – Introduction to Potential Respondents

Hello, everyone. My name is Shanna. I'm a graduate student here at San José State. I'm working on a Master's Degree over in Mexican American Studies. Right now, I'm finishing up the rest of the academic year writing my thesis. That's the main reason I'm visiting with your class/club today – I'd like to ask for your help.

My research analyzes the different ways that racial and ethnic identity may or may not influence individual experiences with the educational institution. Looking specifically at undergraduate students of Mexican ancestry, I'm investigating how interactions with people in high school possibly affect academic success.

I realize that race and ethnicity are sensitive issues. I also realize that some people may be hesitant to participate because I'm not a Chicana. Despite these issues, I assure you all that I have worked hard to be in the Mexican American Studies Program and to research a field where I feel I can make a difference. Once completed, my research will give back to the community by showing younger generations of Chicanas/os what to expect and how to prepare for the transition between high school and the university.

The research consists of analyzing between 20 and 50 students' responses to two-part interviews that are going to take place throughout February and March in the Chicana/o Resource Center and Library. They each take about 1 hour, and you will all be able to create pseudonyms to prevent any of your responses from being linked to your true identity. The only possible risk involved is any emotional expressions of anger, frustration, or whatever you may feel when you think about high school or racial and

ethnic discrimination. However, if you ever feel that the discussion is too painful or a question is too sensitive, you will have every right to stop the interview or skip to the next question.

Whether or not anyone decides to participate in my research, there will be no implications to your club/grade. If there is anyone who would like to help me out, who fits the bill as a person of Mexican heritage and is enrolled as an undergraduate here at SJSU, please fill out the contact information on one of these cards and return them to me. Don't worry if you sign up now and decide later not to participate – we can discuss that when I contact you in the upcoming weeks. Here's my e-mail address and phone number for those of you who are not sure now, but may decide later that you do want to participate. Your advisor/professor also has my personal contact information if you need it.

Thanks for your time!

Appendix B – Pre-Interview Discussion

Before we start, I want to begin by thanking you for volunteering to participate in my research. My hope is that the experiences and thoughts that you choose to share during this interview will help prepare future generations of Chicana/o students. In addition, I hope that this research will contribute to the critical assessment of racial and ethnic discrimination policies at high schools.

In order to get there, however, I'll be asking you to consider some of your decisions and experiences in ways you may not have previously thought. I'll also be asking you to think about relations with friends, classmates, teachers, and counselors in ways that you may not have previously thought.

Just so you know how I'm defining race and ethnicity, let me tell you. I understand race as the biological aspects of our identity that people can see. This could refer to the natural appearance of your hair, eyes, skin, height, etc. I understand ethnicity as more relating to the social aspects of identity that our families teach us when we're little. This could refer to things like clothing, language, religion, etc.

Some of the initial questions ask general details about your high school experiences. Slowly, we'll get into more detail about the people, the classes, and the environment of your school. Once I have a good idea of what your overall experiences were, I'll begin asking about if and how you think race and ethnicity played into your high school education. From there, we'll talk a little about how your high school and college experiences relate to each other. In the end, I'll give you an opportunity to give

advice to some other Chicana/o students on what to expect from the high school experience ahead of them.

Some questions may make you uncomfortable, and I respect that. You have the right to refuse to answer any question, as well as the right to stop the interview process at any time. Please just take your time to reflect and to try to explain your experiences and thoughts to me. I'll try to be as clear as possible in my questioning and not to interfere with your responses. Please stop me if you need anything rephrased or clarified, I'd be more than happy to help.

At the end of the interview, I'll ask you some brief questions about your family background and your schooling before coming to SJSU. Your responses to those questions will help me to contextualize some of your answers to the interview questions.

Do you have any questions or comments or concerns before we start?

Appendix C - Interview Questions

The interview consisted of 34 questions directly relating to the students' reflections on high school experiences. These questions consider their thoughts on the high school atmosphere, their personal interactions with classmates, faculty, and staff, and their opinions and advice regarding discrimination and success in high school. Each question is followed by a reference that explains which of the four research questions it pertains to. Some of the questions do not necessarily concern a specific research question, but are significant in acquiring a sense of the racial and ethnic relations in the various high schools and in determining what issues stand out in the students' memories of high school.

Key to References

G – general information

Q1 – relates to first research question

Q2 – relates to second research question

Q3 – related to third research question

Q4 – relates to fourth research question.

1) To get things started, tell me a little about your high school. What was high school like for you? (G)

2) Tell me about some of your best high school experiences. (G)

3) Tell me about some of your negative high school experiences. (G)

4) Were there any racial or ethnic issues related to these good experiences? (Q2/Q3)

5) Were there any racial or ethnic issues related to these bad experiences? (Q2/Q3)

6) Were any aspects of high school racially or ethnically influenced? (Q2/Q3)

7) Were you in any special academic programs or clubs in high school? (Q2/Q3)

- 8) Were you in the college prep classes or the vocational tracking? Why (not)? (Q2/Q3)
- 9) Were you ever in any ELS, bilingual education, or AVID classes? If so, how did you get placed in those classes? (Q2/Q3)
- 10) Who selected the classes that you took each semester? (Q2/Q3)
- 11) Tell me about some of your favorite people at the high school. (G)
- 12) Tell me about some of the people you tried to avoid at the high school (classmates, teachers, security). (Q2/Q3)
- 13) If people treated you differently based upon your race, what do you think they used as markers to identify you? (Q2/Q3)
- 14) If people treated you differently based upon your ethnicity, what do you think they used as markers to identify you? (Q2/Q3)
- 15) Who were some of the people at the high school that used those racial and ethnic markers to identify you? (Q3)
- 16) How did you deal with it when people treated you differently because of their perception of your racial or ethnic markers? (Q4)
- 17) Did you do anything to prevent people from treating you differently? (Q4)
- 18) Do you think you have racial markers that make you stand out (hair, eyes, skin)? (Q3)
- 19) Do you think you have ethnic markers that make you stand out (name, accent, language, clothing, tattoos, jewelry)? (Q3)
- 20) Tell me about what you did in high school to prepare for college. (G)
- 21) Did you apply to college right after high school? (G)
- 22) What motivated you to go to college? (G)
- 23) Tell me about why you decided to attend SJSU? (G)
- 24) Tell me a little about your major here at the University and how you picked it. (G)
- 25) What did other students and teachers at your high school think about you going to the University? (Q4)

- 26) What did your high school counselors think about you going to the University? (Q4)
- 27) Considering some of the issues we've discussed, do you still feel like racial identity played a role in the quality of your high school experience? (Q1)
- 28) Considering some of the issues we've discussed, do you still feel like ethnic identity played a role in the quality of your high school experience? (Q1)
- 29) Other than race and ethnicity, what aspects of your identity do you feel were important to your high school experience (gender, sexuality, religion)? (Q1)
- 30) In comparison to the impact of your racial and ethnic identity, are these other identities more or less influential on high school education? (Q1)
- 31) What would you do differently if you could re-live high school? (G)
- 32) Considering the issues you have raised, what would you say to a Chicana/o middle school student about to enter high school to help her/him prepare to deal with discrimination? (G)
- 33) What would you say to a Chicana/o high school student considering the possibility of applying to colleges? (G)
- 34) What would you say to a Chicana/o student who is preparing to enter the University? (G)

Appendix D – Rationale for Interview Questions

High School Experiences

The first nine questions in the interview focus on the general high school experiences of the students. The interviews began by asking the participants to describe their high school. This provided a geographic and demographic context for the students' different experiences. In addition, the simplicity of the question served to ease the students into a friendly conversation to relieve any anxieties surrounding discussing personal information, speaking aloud, or the interview itself.

With a solid idea of the high school environment, the participants were asked to describe some of their best and worst experiences. These questions were intended to trigger the students' memories of people and events. This also provided the participants an opportunity to discuss race and/or ethnicity without specifically being prompted to do so.

The students were then asked to discuss the various academic programs and/or clubs that they may have participated in during high school. This served to determine if any of the participants' intellectual abilities were either recognized and rewarded or compromised and ignored. In addition, the question showed the different student groups that the participants chose to associate with and what their interests were.

As a follow-up to asking the students about their academic program participation, they were specifically asked about tracking and language programs. Questioning the participants about remedial, mainstream, college preparatory, honors, and advanced placement courses, I attempted to determine whether the Chicana/o students' intellectual

mobility encountered obstacles within the educational institution. The inquiry about ESL and bilingual education programs aimed to determine if language or accent discrimination played a role in the classes the students attended, paying special attention to whether enrollment was based upon practical need or ethnocentric assumption.

For reasons similar to questioning about ESL and bilingual education, the students were asked to explain the process of selecting classes each semester. This demonstrated whether the intellectual input of the participants was molded by the individuals' confidence levels through self-scheduling or by the counselors' determination of academic potential, which may or may not have been influenced by racial or ethnic stereotypes about mental capacity and educational aspirations.

The last questions in this section asked the participants to discuss some of their favorite people on their high school campuses. In addition, they were asked about some of the people that they may have tried to avoid. These inquiries aimed to find possible patterns among whom the students chose to associate with and to disassociate with during high school. Their responses also helped to determine to what extent other students, faculty, and staff contributed to either an amiable or problematic environment at the educational institution.

College Preparation

The questions about college preparation served to test whether or not racial and/or ethnic identity may have shaped the students' abilities or aspirations to continue their education. To begin to determine this, the participants were asked what they did to help

prepare themselves for college. Depending upon references to aptitude tests, class loads, and appointments with counselors, the answers demonstrated to what extent the processes of thinking about, preparing for, and applying to colleges was institutionally supported.

The participants were asked to describe the time, if any, spent between high school and the university. Combined with the inquiry as to students' motivations to continue their education, the questions aimed at determining how other students, faculty, and/or counselors may or may not have contributed to the participants' excitement about attending college. In addition, these questions tested the students' thoughts and opinions about how a college education may or may not create benefits and opportunities not available to individuals going directly from high school to the job force.

More specifically, the participants were questioned on their decisions to attend San José State University and to earn a major and/or minor in certain disciplines. Although the university is a successfully respected institution, the questioning was aimed at determining why the participants had not attended a UC school or a private university. Their decision about which university to attend may or may not have been shaped by the relationships that the participants had with other students, faculty, or counselors in their high schools by giving them ideas about either the value of their previous scholastic performance and/or their ability to compete on an academic level. Similarly, questions about the students' majors and/or minors may reveal whether or not stereotypes of intellectual potential influenced the participants' decisions to earn their degrees in the "hard" or "soft" sciences.

The last questions in the section on college preparation asked the participants about the thoughts and reactions of other students, faculty, and counselors upon learning that they were attending college. This is important because the comparably low levels of collegiate attendance by people of color may be due to racism or ethnocentrism in the high school environment in relation to the knowledge and assistance students receive from various sources within the educational institution.

Perceptions of Racial and Ethnic Identity

Although the sections on high school experiences and college preparation provide opportunities for students to describe interactions that may be understood as racist and/or ethnocentric, the section focusing on the participants' perceptions of racial and ethnic identity in high school examines their individual interpretations of the extent to which race and ethnicity played a role in the quality of education. The set of 14 questions begins by asking the participants whether or not their best and worst high school experiences may have been related to any racial and/or ethnic issues. These inquiries prompted the students to determine whether or not racism and/or ethnocentrism affected their educational experiences. In case a racial and/or ethnic issue was related to some other experience not previously discussed in the interview, the students were asked if any alternative aspects of high school were racially and/or ethnically influenced.

To try to determine what the participants saw as the sources of racially and/or ethnically influenced situations in high school, they were asked to describe what racial and/or ethnic markers may have been used to identify them. In addition, they were asked

to name some of the people in high school that utilized the racial and ethnic markers to single them out as Chicana/o. These questions served to see what the participants perceived as the possible race- and/or ethnic-based thoughts of the students, faculty, counselors, and other people involved in their high school education.

After discussing what and who may have created a situation where the students received favoritism and/or discrimination due to their racial and ethnic identity markers, the participants were questioned as to how they responded to the situations. The students were also asked whether or not they took voluntary action to attempt to prevent people in high school from treating them differently. These questions attempted to determine some of the coping strategies employed to fight discrimination in the educational institution from a position of limited power and voice.

Similar to the inquiry about what the participants perceived as racial and/or ethnic markers that triggered favoritism or discrimination in high school, they were also asked what they perceived as their own racial and ethnic markers. The questions about racial and ethnic self-perceptions were included in the interviews to consider the possibility that what the students viewed as outwardly presented specific markers may differ and/or vary from personal interpretations of racial and ethnic identity attributes.

After the interview covered both discussions of positive and negative experiences and racial and ethnic features, the participants were asked whether or not they maintained their original opinion of the role of racial and ethnic identity markers in the quality of their education. These questions determined how the individual students were able to

critically analyze their own experiences with potentially racist and/or ethnocentric people in the educational institution.

At the end of the section on perceptions of racial and ethnic identity, the participants were asked to consider what other aspects of their identity played a role in the quality of their high school education. This allowed for recognition of the variables of class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, physical ability, etc. In addition, the participants were asked to compare the impact of their racial and ethnic identity to the variables that they may have identified as significant. This comparison was made to determine whether the students felt race, ethnicity, or other identities (i.e. – family income, homosexuality, handicap) proved to be more influential on their overall high school educational experience.

Advising Future Chicana/o Students

The remaining questions in the first part of the interview brought together the ideas of how racial and ethnic identity have affected the educational experiences of the respondents. They were asked what advice they would give to students in various educational scenarios. Although this line of questioning is unusual and does not directly address the research questions, these inquiries create a line of communication between Chicanas/os who have succeeded in graduating high school and the future generations. This advice could be utilized to help defend Chicanas/os from the potential racism and ethnocentrism, as well as classism, sexism, etc., that they may face in the educational institutions.

Appendix E – Pre-Demographic Questionnaire Discussion

Wow, that was a lot of stuff to cover. Thanks again for taking the time to meet with me and to discuss some of your personal experiences. I hope that I can use this information to make a difference in the way that high schools are evaluated for educational equity.

I told you before that I also wanted to ask you some questions about your family background. These are going to help me to place some of your high school experiences into the bigger picture of your individual life. Some of these questions are really simple personal things, like your birthday and hometown. Others are going to address some of your parents' experiences.

I assure you that my interest in your experiences and your family history is solely to analyze your perceptions of the possible effects of race and ethnicity on your education. Is that okay?

Appendix F – Demographic Questionnaire

- 1) Do you have any nicknames?
- 2) When's your birthday?
- 3) You're male/female?
- 4) Where were you born?
- 5) Do you remember what date you immigrated to the US (if applicable)?
- 6) From the time you were born to the present, what are the different places that you've lived?
- 7) Where was the high school that you attended?
- 8) Why did you switch schools (if applicable)?
- 9) What's your mother's hometown?
- 10) What level of education has she received?
- 11) What does she do for a living?
- 12) What year did she immigrate to the US (if applicable)?
- 13) Tell me a little about your grandparents on your mother's side of the family.
- 14) What's your father's hometown?
- 15) What level of education has he received?
- 16) What does he do for a living?
- 17) What year did he immigrate to the US (if applicable)?
- 18) Tell me a little about your grandparents on your father's side of the family.

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