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Students' Perceptions of Black-Latino Conflicts in Public Schools


A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of


Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Michelle Rae Ysais

December 2011



Dissertation Committee:
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Committee Chairperson

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION


Students' Perceptions of Black-Latino Conflicts in Public Schools


by

Michelle Rae Ysais

Doctor of Philosophy Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, December 2011
Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson

This project provides a student perspective of the so-called Black-Brown "racial"

tension in Los Angeles high schools. A theoretical foundation for examining Black and

Latino tensions and their structural influences is provided along with an explanation of

the racialized images seen in the media that contribute to moral panic in the surrounding

community and promote school practices most comparable to the prison setting. Critical

race theory, internal colonial theory and deprivation approaches to explaining prison

violence are employed in the debunking of media portrayals of school violence. My

research is based on interviews with 20 Latino and 20 black students from affected

schools. These interviews provided students' first-hand accounts of race relations in their

schools and their own explanations of school violence. They reveal that the triggers of

violent incidents included interpersonal conflicts that involve a romantic partner, and the

maintenance and preservation of respect for romantic relationships, crews, and self. The

role of the school and its responses to violent incidents is considered and the physical

characteristics of the school and how it contributes to the overall prison-like experience for students is also considered.  School responses included no response, punishment for only those involved in the violent incident, and the imposition of more stringent zero-tolerance practices were the most common responses to violence. The imposition of punishments and harsher regulation of all students was reported to be the least effective method of promoting student self-regulation.

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**Chapter One**

**Introduction**

Over the past decade, there has been a great deal of negative media attention paid to students of color in Southern California, leading parents and local residents to believe there is cause for alarm. Local news media portrays these students along with images of riot ready police deployed to schools in places such as South Central Los Angeles. The racialized tensions within the community are often emphasized when violent conflicts among students occur. Newspapers echo similar messages of "racial tension" and "Black-Latino" conflicts in their headlines. One Los Angeles newspaper headline reads "In L.A., race kills," another reads "Racial Tensions Overheat at L.A. High School." Still another headline directly addresses Black-Brown relations: "Are Black-vs.-Brown Racial Tensions Driving Homicide in L.A.?" Finally, one headline not only offers readers an account of the racial tensions in schools but also lays the blame for these tensions squarely in the lap of Black and Latino youth; it reads "The black-Latino blame game." These images help to scare communities and pave the way for stricter policies regarding youth and increased police presence at schools.

Over the last 5 years, racial tensions at urban Los Angeles area high schools have contributed to the community's stress and anxiety over Black-Brown tensions. High schools in Southern California have recently been in the news due to said "racial" tension between Latino and Black students. One high school in Los Angeles quickly became one of the most infamous of schools included in the media coverage of Black-Brown racial tensions. Articles from local newspapers offer numerous depictions of Jefferson. One

article describes it as a school where "…hundreds of black and Latino students jumped into a series of melees last year, resulting in 25 student arrests -- someone is always looking" (Hayasaki 2006). It goes on to describe the school's attempts to maintain control over its student body in this way: "more than 100 newly installed surveillance cameras watch the campus… [and] more than 35 administrators, security guards, counsellors and school police officers supervise." In May of 2008, another report suggested that there is a "myth" of Black-Brown solidarity that has been debunked because recently over 100 black and Latino students were "brawling at a major Los Angeles high school" (Bihm 2008). More explicitly, Sheriff Lee Baca reported that, "Race-based violence has even found its way into our school system" (Baca 2008). Although he does admit that there have been no deaths in these incidents, he goes on to suggest that recent fighting at another high school in South Los Angeles is evidence that racial tensions exist. Ultimately, ongoing population growth and demographic change, along with competition over scarce resources, are named as the main sources of racial resentments and violent outbreaks (Baca 2008; Bennett 2008). A similar explanation is offered to explain "racial violence" at Santa Monica High School in April of 2005 (Caruso 2005). The response in this case, and a variety of others, is the "beefing up of security" or "a brief lockdown" and are most comparable to the manner in which prison guards and officials handle racial tensions in prison (Caruso 2005; Pomfret 2006). The language of fear is always included too: "Will the violence break out again?" "What can be done to quell the violence?" "What do they want?" All of this seems to exemplify what Stanley Cohen calls a 'moral panic.' First coined in his book, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972: 9) the term refers

to times when society develops concerns about the values and principles that society holds dear and are believed to be at risk and these sentiments are amplified by the media.

Much of the focus of academic research on school violence has been on the role of the curriculum (Lessing and Clarke 1976; Nicholson 2000; Siraj-Blatchford and Sirai-Blatchford 1999; Sleeter 2000), peer mediation (Lindsay 1998; Stevahn et al 2002), specialized training of students (Nicholson 2000; Thomlinson 1992) and faculty (Gentry and Watkins 1974; Nicholson 2000; Ponterotto and Pedersen 1993; Thomlinson 1992; Warikoo, Natasha 2004), and law and order tactics that control students' movement and provide surveillance (Gallagher and Fusco 2006; Lipman 2006). While there is evidence that suggests that these approaches serve to alleviate Black-Brown tensions in schools, they presume that violence is located within violent individuals and that this so-called violence is potentially resolved through the implementation of programs that address these individual tendencies.

Previous research on black-brown conflicts among students brings much needed attention to the racial dynamics within Los Angeles area schools. However, it fails to provide adequate insight into the experiences of the students who actually attend these schools or their feelings with respect to race relations at their high schools. In order to gain an accurate understanding of black-brown conflict among students, students' own perceptions and experiences must be taken into consideration. More generally, literature on race relations in the United States suffers from an over-reliance on the black-white binary which overlooks the experiences of other ethnic and racial minority groups

(Morgan 2004; Schuman and Bobo 1998). There has been relatively little systematic research that attempts to explain the tensions that exist between minority groups, especially black and brown youth. Despite a plethora of media images depicting "race wars" between black and Latino students in Los Angeles schools, few scholars have adequately analyzed these "racial" tensions.

This dissertation seeks to provide the missing student perspective on black-brown conflicts within public schools by collecting information about their experiences directly from them. I interviewed students asking them about their experiences and feelings about their high schools as well as their perceptions about the sources of racial tension between groups of color on campus. These students are located on campuses whose racial composition is primarily black and Latino. By focusing on Black and Latino students, this project intentionally abandons the black-white binary and instead focuses on the nature of race relations between these two minority groups which has been neglected in prior studies of race relations among youth. These students' experiences are understood and informed by a critical race perspective.

The findings reveal that the relations between these groups and the nature of the conflicts that emerge in the school setting are far more a product of the interpersonal conflicts that occur between individuals rather than the more macro level race relations that school administrators suggest in their responses to conflicts. Findings also revealed that the schools in this district have experienced a level of prisonization that has resulted in the schools in this study to appear and function in a more prison-like manner as a

response to student conflicts and the overall trend of zero-tolerance as a means to control behavior. These findings suggest that the incorporation of students' opinions and understandings in the causes and responses to conflict is imperative in getting at the heart of the matter and avoiding further prisonization of schools.

In this chapter, I first provide an overview of the relevant theories that inform this project. I then offer a number of theories that provide explanations about school violence and compare them to my findings. Finally, I provide a summary of the methodology used to collect and analyze the data for this project.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

With its origins in the political struggles of Derrick Bell (Roithmayr 1999) critical race theory problematizes the "liberal discourse" and "race neutrality" or color-blind approaches to the law (Bell 1995a; Crenshaw 1995), "color-blind justice" (Gotanda 1995), "equal opportunity" (Harris 1995) and "equal protection" (Bell 1995b; Freeman 1995; Crenshaw 1995). Critical race theory begins with the assumption that race is a pervasive social construct that is defined legally and in an historical context wherein whites are afforded privilege by the denial of privilege for those who are not white (Haney-Lopez 1996, 2000; Harris 1995).

The goal then is to promote racial consciousness in an effort to adjust the current social arrangements in a way that is more equitable, particularly for people of color (Haney-Lopez 2003) rather than employing color-blind tactics for contending with racism (Crenshaw 2002; Chang 1993). The resulting focus of critical race theory is on structural conditions that contribute to the unequal access to resources for people of color. Despite

these efforts, some of the attention to Black-Brown relations fails to cast aside color-blind approaches that only continue to ignore racial privilege (and oppression in the case of racial minorities) as meaningful ways to understand current race relations (Harris 1997; Ross 2002). The result is whiteness—a normative condition—as a possession not held by groups of color (Delgado and Stefancic 2001: 76).

The use of critical race theory to analyze public education is not new (see Landson-Billings and Tate 1995; Parker, Deyhle, and Villenas 1999; Solorzano and Bernal 2001). Those who directly address the Black and Latino experiences in education have discovered quite easily that there are great disparities for them in school (Kozol 1991). In school whiteness is still constructed and defined as the "absence of the 'contaminating' influences of blackness" (Landson-Billings and Tate 1995). This idea is in part supported by the fact that Blacks and Latinos are frequently overrepresented in special education classrooms (OSEP 2002) and discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions (Bay Area School Reform Collabortive 2001). The strength of CRT in understanding racial inequality in schools is that it provides theories that reject biological criteria as the determinant of difference while providing historical, social, and economic context for the existing social conditions (Watts and Everelles 2004).

CRT provides a useful foundation with which to examine race relations in schools. Findings suggest that students in Los Angeles area high schools are 1) experiencing school in a segregated way as explained by CRT and 2) that the although the schools have made strides in providing a safe environment for students, they have

actually fallen into a philosophy that promotes fear and concern over Black and Latino youth.

**Internal Colonialism Perspective**

In addition to critical race theory, the internal colonial model also provides useful explanations for the ongoing disadvantage of racial and ethnic minorities by applying explanatory concepts of European colonization to economic, cultural, and political components of inequality (Blauner 1972; Fanon 1965; Memmi 1965; Mirande 1982; Omi and Winant 1994). The European colonial model is applied such that a colony within society is created when the colonizer enters an area. The colonizer uses its power to coerce the colonized into oppressive conditions. Similarly, internally colonized people are forced to interact with oppressive institutions in the colony. In internal colonial conditions, this creates feelings of vulnerability and sometimes violent reactions toward institution and towards one another (Fanon 1963; Kerner 1968; Freire 1970; Barrera 1979). In schools, these internal colonies exist where there are gross inequalities endemic to the school atmosphere (Wattes and Everelles 2004). In these schools, largely populated with Black and Latino students, the spaces are characterized by inadequate educational opportunities while the surrounding neighborhoods are characterized by high unemployment and underemployment, disinvestment in communities, lack of access to quality resources, police brutality, and unjust court systems that create the aforementioned feelings of vulnerability and despair (Wattes and Everelles 2004). Students caught in the struggle for dominance in schools are all too aware of the "overarching societal system of White supremacy, racialism, and competition for finite

resources" (Ulchiny 1996: 354). This is arguably structural violence (constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures) insofar as individuals and communities have limited knowledge of (and recourse against) the structural sources of these oppressive conditions (Galtung 1969). In cases such as this institutional state apparatuses (ISA) like schools, the media, and churches are used as repressive forces because citizens readily accept the position of legitimate authority these institutions hold. Inevitably these institutions are representing the position of the ruling class or the colonizer. Along with critical race theory internal colonial approaches offer insight into the contextual conditions and dynamics between dominant white society and minority students. However, they do not go far enough in providing the more nuanced, microlevel explanations for the violence that emerge between Blacks and Latinos who are subject to oppressive conditions. Other perspectives such as ecological theories and deprivation theories help us to better understand the particular conditions under which inter-racial conflict among black and Latino students emerges and the processes through which the pent-up frustrations become expressed through inter-racial violence

Again, this macrolevel approach helps to describe the conditions for students in school and the larger community that it is embedded in. It sheds light on the fact that the schools included here are largely populated with Black and Latino students and that their experience in school is in many ways an internal colonial experience. They attend school with other Black and Latino students and very few other groups of color but more so without a significant number of white students. This seems to have impacted parents' and the community's sense that students in these schools are more dangerous than they really

are. Responses to school conflicts that incorporate parental and community member input tend to use a "get tough" attitude that is used in the most dangerous situations and with the most dangerous people. These are high schools, that point seems lost.

**The Ecology of Violence**

The spatial aspects of violence also provide important insight into the origins of Black-Brown racial conflict in schools. Stemming from internal colonial models of education is the emergence of "colonial ghettos." One example is the current overrepresentation of students of color in special education classrooms. Often these special education classrooms are designated locations for "dangerous" students of color to congregate (Watts and Everelles 2004).

The impact of this spatial segregation ties back to separate but equal conditions in schools prior to *Brown vs. Board of Education* while simultaneously transforming schools into a prison-like institution complete with security guards, surveillance technologies, cameras, metal detectors, pat downs and the like that are artefacts of Jim Crow era segregation. Additionally, in recent years new ways of thinking about the construction of apparatuses of discipline, confinement, surveillance, and deviance have mushroomed, calling into question the current views of violence and punishment (Burstyn et al 2001). Moreover, student resistance to these conditions are most often responded to with exceedingly stringent methods of control (Devine 1996). Despite the significance of spatial inequalities, this approach does not really explain the kind of violence that happens outside the classroom which is the focus of this research. Instead my proposed dissertation research aims to discover a different type of spatial analysis that

takes into account space as a limited resource for which internally colonized students struggle. This struggle leads to feelings of being slighted, overlooked, and discriminated against or demonized.

Peter Blau's (1977) macrostructural theory addresses some of the spatial issues that exist in Los Angeles area schools. He explains that interracial contact in a given location is reliant on an opportunity to form interracial ties and the chance that these opportunities are realized. Moreover, while racial heterogeneity and racial segregation are key characteristics of the locations for these opportunities to occur, homophily is key in the emergence of interracial ties (Goldsmith 2004: 588). His theory actually falls in line with what students reported with respect to their feelings about other students of color. They report that they have had numerous opportunities to create interracial ties and have done exactly that. What his theory misses is that interracial ties do not prevent conflicts of an interpersonal nature from emerging between students of different races. These interpersonal conflicts are those that have been racialized by the schools' administrators in their understandings and responses to conflict and do not exist in the emergence of the conflict.

**Importation or Deprivation**

While spatially oriented approaches begin to incorporate law and order elements in understanding Black-Brown racial tension in schools, other types of criminological approaches address questions as to the origins of these tensions. Beginning with Donald Clemmer's *The Prison Community* (1958), there has been a focus on explaining prison culture. Originally designed to explain prison culture, importation theories of violence

located the source of violence within the individual. Violent people brought their violent tendencies with them into the prison (or school) and the result was violence within the institution (Conrad 1966). Furthermore, prison life was so bleak that any impediment to gaining or maintaining privileges could trigger an outburst of individual violence (McCorkle, Menthe and Drass, 1995). Irwin and Cressey (1977) argued that the culture prisoners brought with them from the outside should not be underestimated in its importance. As such, variables like prison security level, staff-to-inmate ratio, and over-crowding are presumed to affect inmate violence irrespective of the individual characteristics of inmates (Lahm 2008). The classic Stanford prison experiment was intended to test this hypothesis. The findings, although ethically challenged, provided an opening for those who would challenge importation theory's individualistic explanation for violence and instead directed efforts in locating the source of violence in the prison social context (Cox et al 1984; Ekland-Olsen 1986; Gaes and McGuire 1985).

This alternative explanation focuses on the way that inmate culture is produced by the prison environment (Goffman 1961; Hunt et al 1993 Sykes 1958). It is explained that the inmate social system is formed in response to the pains of imprisonment and the deprivation inmates experience while they are incarcerated (Cloward 1977; Goffman 1961; Leger and Stratton 1977, and Sykes and Messinger 1977). These approaches suggest that prison overcrowding produces increased levels of fear, anxiety, and frustration that are manifested in varying levels of "tolerance for crowding, depression, blood pressure, mood changes, illness complaints, and aggression" (Gaes and McGuire 1985) or what Erving Goffman (1961) called "pains of imprisonment." These dynamics

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are comparable to the conditions in Los Angeles schools. Prisonization is a useful concept to explain the transformation of public schools, which increasingly rely in rules and procedures used to maintain order within prisons.

Deprivation approaches explain more about the violence reported here particularly with respect to students who experienced deprivation of space and facilities. Although it is not a text book example of deprivation, students who reported having limitation placed on their movement and use of facilities explained that these limitations put them in contact with others with whom they had conflict already. So the deprivation of space prevented them from avoiding one another and instead placed them squarely in the presence of one another where the conflict could escalate.

**Theories of Interracial Conflict and Racial Violence**

Various scholars provide theoretical accounts for the intergroup hostility that people feel in more heterogeneous urban areas (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). One such theory is the simple self-interest model that says that hostility between members of two racial groups reflects conflicting economic (and sometimes political) interests (Kluegal and Smith 1986: 18). Bobo and Hutchings (1996: 953) explain that "objective personal vulnerability to economic or political deprivation provides the direct basis for interethnic hostility." For example, the changing racial make-up of the school environment imposes certain "costs" or "burdens" that particular racial groups did not face before. This does not seem to explain the conflicts described by respondents in my research. The incidents described by students to not indicate any specific knowledge of how the person with whom they have conflict may be placing them in economic or political position of

deprivation. The students describe a much more personal reason for the conflicts they witnessed or experienced.

Ulchiny (1996) found that culture was also an area in which racial groups conflict with one another. She explains that "the question of which group's culture was to dominate was seen by students and staff as a turf war between groups that identify themselves as distinct" (Ulchiny 1996: 349). In her analysis, the role of culture emerges in that language, particularly Spanish, was an indicator to Black students that their cultural dominance had come to a close when school curriculum began to focus on culture rather than race (Ulchiny 1996: 351). Rosenbloom and Way (2004) add to the discussion by examining students' experiences of discrimination. Their findings indicate that discrimination by students, against Asian students may have been due in part to their feelings about which group is favoured by "adults in positions of authority such as police officers, shopkeepers, and teachers in school" (434). So the driving force of hostility is the material state of individual and their current social conditions. Again this explanation seems to be missing the mark. It assumes that the micro level face-to-face conflicts that students describe are not focused on the larger group competition that is described here.

Similar is the classical prejudice model (Kinder and Sears 1981; Pettrigrew 1982). Most commonly this approach locates interracial hostility in individual psychological dispositions rather than in objective reality learned through socialization. Prejudice is characterized by ignorance about the group toward which whom this hostility and prejudice is directed thereby driving the level of hostility (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Stephan and Stephan 1984). Like all other aspects of life, prejudicial attitudes are learned

through socialization, the social learning of cultural ideas, and appropriate responses to certain groups. In explaining Black-Brown hostility in schools this approach simply indicates that students bring individual understandings of race and ethnicity to school. Evidence of this is clear in interviews. Students did not exhibit ignorance about the students of other races or ethnicities.

The "stratification of beliefs" model explains interracial conflict results from "the dominant stratification ideology in the United States [which] holds that opportunities are plentiful and that individuals succeed or fail largely on the basis of their own effort and ability" (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). Accordingly, when people feel as though rewards are offered or earned by those who do not deserve them, there is an increased likelihood that conflict will occur. However, when people take on a more structural perspective of stratification they are more likely to understand that certain groups of people are systematically privileged or they are systematically denied the opportunities for success (Huber and Form 1973). This is not a far stretch from the simple self-interest model with the exception that opportunity or the lack thereof is the focus. In one study the findings indicated that there was more conflict between Black and Korean minorities in Los Angeles than between Latino and Korean minorities in the same location. The reason cited for these differences was said to be the shared immigrant status and beliefs of Latinos and Koreans that left them with a sense of plentiful opportunity in the United States (Cheng and Espiritu 1989) an idea that readily translates to the school environment.

In contrast to this individualistic explanation is Blumer's group position model. This is where feelings of competition arise from historically and collectively derived sentiments about the positions in the greater social order. In this case in-group members feel a sense of entitlement in relation to the out-group (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). Here a fully developed sense of group position is developed by the interweaving of four elements: 1) a belief about in-group superiority (e.g. ethnocentrism), 2) an in-group understanding of the out-group as "alien," 3) assumptions of proprietary claim to certain rights, and resources, and 4) the out-group's desire for greater access to those rights and resources none of which are reducible to individual learning or sentiment (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). In school, this dynamic takes the form of minority group competition for dominance but derives its explanatory strength in group level actions. In order to explain racial conflict in schools, one would have to assume that students align themselves primarily by ethnicity or race which might not always occur within the school setting.

Blalock's (1967) group threat theory suggests that the relative size of minority groups is important for understanding race relations within schools. Although his focus in on Black-White relations it does provide a basis for examining Black-Brown relations. He distinguishes between biracial schools that have relatively equal-sized racial groups (fifty-fifty schools) and those with unequal-sized racial groups. He argues that fifty-fifty schools are more likely to experience conflict because of competition for control (Goldsmith 2004; Moody 2001; Sigelman et al 1996) unlike schools with unequal-sized

racial groups where the larger group dominates the smaller one and the smaller groups accepts the domination (Longshore 1982a, 1982b).

Contact theory also addresses cultural tension as it exists in schools. Allport (1954) argues that interracial contact tends to create negative outcomes due to individual prejudices and stereotyping in the general population and it also provides an opportunity for positive outcomes vis-à-vis contact between students. Positive outcomes are said to be encouraged when the racial groups hold equal status, there is authoritative support for all groups, groups exercise cooperation, and when the groups share goals. Positive outcomes should result when schools meet these criteria. Negative outcomes result when these criteria inadequately counter "prejudice and stereotyping in the general public" (Goldsmith 2004: 593). Schools have been shown to produce inter-racial contact, but not under the conditions that contact theorists suggest will encourage cooperative relations among racial groups. Ultimately inter-racial contact alone is not enough to produce inter-racial harmony. Instead inter-racial contact within existing conditions in public schools is more likely to produce inter-racial conflict and violence.

Overall it is important to combine insights from both macro-level and micro-level theories to understand the emergence of inter-racial conflict among black and Latino students. The macro-level theories (e.g. critical race theory and internal colonialism) help to explain the foundational conditions that effect schools and their (in)ability to serve black and Latino students existence as well as the emergence of pent-up frustrations among students. Micro-level theories (e.g. ecological theories and deprivation theories)

help to explain how and when those frustrations become expressed through inter-racial conflict and violence.

Unfortunately this latter set of theories frequently misses the true causes of the violence that was reported here. Rather than prejudice being at the heart of these conflicts, the violence reported was more likely to be the result of some interpersonal conflict that students were experiencing apart from race or ethnicity. Although some students did exhibit racist attitudes for each other, these attitudes were not reported to be the root cause of the original conflict. Perhaps these theories are not quite microlevel enough to capture what has created the patterns of conflict that exist in a classroom and school setting.

These explanations stand in contrast with my findings. I found that racism provided students with tools they could use to hurt or insult each other. However, insults were also shaped by gender and social class as well as other types of subordinated statuses like sexual orientation. More importantly racial hostility, competition, and prejudice were not the main motivations for conflict as was put forth in these theories of interracial violence.

**Methodology**

I combine information from in-depth interviews with students and community members along with ethnographic field observations of black-Latino relations and the school setting at Southern California schools. By focusing on these settings and using these multiple methods, I can provide a more nuanced analysis of black-Latino conflicts

among students and the conditions under which they occur than would be possible by employing only one method.

**Participants**

The sample for this project includes recent graduates and community members from Los Angeles area high schools. The data was collected beginning in the summer of 2009 and continue through 2010. Additionally, ethnographic field research in the community provided a fuller understanding of the context of violence as well as the community's response to said violence. These qualitative methods challenge the dominant discourse by using the voices of people of color (Feagin 1991; Fernandez 2002; Heyink and Tymstra 1993; Smith-Maddox and Solorzano 2002; Solorzano and Villalpando 1998) as opposed to providing "crisis talk" (Fernandez 2002) that reinforces the failures of racial minorities. As such, they are well-suited for exploring racial inequality by providing rich and contextual information (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2001).

**Settings**

Los Angeles Area School District (LAASD) student population ranges from schools that are predominantly African American to those that are predominantly Latino, to those that are populated fairly equally by Black, Latino and White students. The district as a whole however, is 73% Hispanic, 11% African American, 9% white and 4% Asian. LAASD teachers are more racially diverse than its student population with 31% of them identified as Hispanic, 12% as white, 43% as African American, and almost 9% as

Asian. The district is responsible for just under 688,000 students (CDE Demographics 2008).

This district has been chosen in part because of these racial demographics and its unique history as a location for racial unrest dating back to the 1968 student and teacher walkouts when the student population was primarily African American. Today LAASD has made headlines and television news stories depicting "violent youth of color" particularly Black and Latino youth who must be subdued by riot police and aerial response.

**Interviews**

I interviewed a total of 40 recent graduates from LAASD high schools, focusing on their perceptions of the factors influencing racial tensions among students as well as their evaluation of schools' responses to violent conflicts that occurred at their high schools. My sample included 20 Black students and 20 Latino students. Half of each group was male so that boys' and girls' perspectives could be compared. Beginning with students participating in the Summer Bridge Program at a California State University in Southern California, a snowball sample of students was created. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide in Appendix 1. The interviews lasted 1-2 hours and were conducted in locations that offered respondents a degree of privacy when answering questions. These interviews were selectively transcribed and coded. Notes were also taken during or shortly after the interviews. The topics of discussion during interviews included students' accounts of racial strife and their assessments of the cause of the conflict, their perspectives on schools conditions

including space, tangible resources (i.e. books, desks, and sanitary conditions) and intangible resources (teacher attention). Of course the strength of this design is its flexibility in allowing students to include topics not mentioned here. Care was taken to discover additional information provided to explain the racial conflict witnessed or experienced by respondents.

In addition to interviewing students about racial violence in their schools, I also conducted interviews with surrounding community members (a total of 5) about school conditions at the local high school in an effort to develop a more complete understanding of the contributing factors. Community members were also interviewed using a semi-structured approach as shown in Appendix 2. Information provided by community members is of specific interest in this project because they represent the adult perspective and the concerns expressed to school administration that triggers school responses to violent student outbursts. More importantly, their relationships with students are unlike those that students have with principles, teacher and/or deans and they offer informant perspectives that school faculty are unable to fulfil.

### Researcher

The role of the insider is a crucial part of qualitative methods of data collection in that insiders are uniquely qualified to interpret and understand cultural and language nuances of the population being investigated (Zinn 1979). As a Latina from Southern California, I am an insider to my Latino respondents but an outsider to my black respondents. As a product of the Southern California schools I have participated in a number of student-centered programs that serve this community and my qualifications for

conducting this research project are copious. As an undergraduate and graduate student, I have worked with the Student Support Program in a variety of roles including as a student mentor and study group coordinator, supplemental instructor, team leader, remedial reading instructor, and assistant researcher. This included conducting informal focus groups with these students with the goal of providing them an opportunity to discuss the manner in which their schools (especially LAASD) were being portrayed in the media at the time. As an instructor at California State University between 2003 and 2010 I have been engaged in ongoing collaboration with the Student Support Program, helping it with outreach to the local community of incoming freshman to the university. While my position with this program and its students helped me gain access to and establish trust among the students I interviewed, my status also reflects my outsider status as someone older and more highly educated than my interviewees.

**Chapter Overview**

Chapter two discusses the actual triggers of violence and process by which verbal conflicts escalate into physical ones. By and large, interpersonal conflicts were reported to be the most common causes of conflicts. These interpersonal conflicts were reported to be those that initiated over a romantic partner, perceived or real, or disrespect of some other sort, either to self or to a crew. The theme of respect and disrespect are discussed here in that they seem to be at the root of the majority of interpersonal conflicts. This chapter examines these dynamics in terms of gender and looks closely at the role that bystanders play in the escalation of violence.

Chapter three examines schools' responses to conflicts among students. Three general types of responses were reported. They were 1) preaching racial tolerance, 2) increasing surveillance and restricting and denying access to school facilities, and 3) responding only to the individuals directly involved in the conflict. These three types are discussed and critiques for their effectiveness or lack thereof. What is consistent is students' beliefs that more often than not, school administrators miss the mark in responding to student conflicts. Increased surveillance and control and school assemblies fell short in getting messages about race across. More importantly, because students in large part felt as though the causes of conflicts were not racially or ethnically based, the responses that racialized the conflicts were met with the least satisfaction.

In chapter four, I discuss zero tolerance policies and their influence in the lives of students. Interviews reveal that students hold varying attitudes about zero-tolerance policies and practices ranging from feelings of powerlessness to indifference. Regardless of their feelings about zero-tolerance their responses indicate an increased level of contact with police. Prisonization, including the physical aspects of the school's campus (i.e. walls and fences) is part of the zero tolerance discussion and revealed that students are not likely to increase their level of self-regulation despite the increase of prisonlike practices and procedures. Overall, intimidation was the most common feeling reported by students about the increased surveillance and regulation that came along with zero-tolerance policies. Finally, this chapter discusses exclusionary practices such as expulsion and detention. Interviews indicated that these practices estrange the student and

teachers from one another in dealing with conflicts at school. Additionally these practices contribute to the overall prisonization of the school in general.

Chapter five provides an overview of chapters two through four and offers implications for future research in this area. This chapter highlights the disconnect between the way that students understand interracial conflicts and the manner in which school administrators interpret and therefore respond to these incidents. My student informants reveal that although race did come into play in the conflicts, it was not the primary reason for the conflicts to initiate. Instead, my interview findings suggest that violent conflicts among students was mainly triggered by interpersonal conflicts over romantic partners, and lack of, or preservation of, respect for self, and crews and goading helped to escalate verbal conflicts into physical ones. The harsh policies of zero-tolerance and the increased surveillance that are implemented in response to student violence were identified by students as the most ineffectual in encouraging self-regulation among them. I conclude that schools would benefit from including a student perspective when determining what the causes of violence are and the most effective response to that violence.

**Chapter 2: Triggers of Conflict Among Students**

**Introduction**

For the students of LAASD interviewed here, the experiences of witnessing violent incidents revealed a variety of circumstances under which conflict emerged. Their descriptions of the events and atmosphere that led to, and followed, fights and other violence indicated that the actual triggers of violence varied. Whereas the media focuses a great deal of attention on inter-racial conflicts, none of the fights among students that I interviewed were depicted as being motivated solely by racial conflict. Instead, the overall consensus was that fights between students began as issues of interpersonal conflicts over personal matters and, in some cases, group loyalty. This was true for both inter-racial conflicts as well as intra-racial ones. In general, students explained conflicts that resulted from two broad dynamics. The first dynamic was the interpersonal violence that resulted from disagreements and misunderstandings about a romantic partner (or a potential romantic partner). Here, I examine the slight variations in the way that boys and girls address threats to their romantic interests and partners. The second broad theme was conflict that emerged out of loyalty to a crew that was present in the surrounding neighborhood. Often, these latter types of conflict followed after a conflict based on the first dynamic and the underlying issues of disrespect as well as an interest in holdings one's ground in response to personal insults to self or loved ones.

Respect is an important and overarching aspect of conflicts based on romantic interests and loyalty to crews. It is also the very target of goading. As such, respect is of special interest in understanding the actual triggers of violence in schools. Respect, and

its maintenance, is evident in incidents that began over the threat to a romantic partner or interest. In these cases respect is threatened when a romantic partner is pursued by another. For the person whose romantic partner is being seduced there is potential to lose respect over the loss of their partner. The disrespect they experience comes from the other pursuing their partner or interest without trying to conceal it. Should the partner or interest choose to accept the advances of the other person, a loss of respect is inevitable. This is what Goffman (1959) described as losing face. When someone is at risk of losing face, they will work to protect from that happening. There is another level of respect that is at risk when a person's crew is insulted. Because crews represent an important source of status for the individuals who belong to them, any insult or put-down directed at the crew is essentially an insult or put-down to the people who belong to the crew. Again the maintenance of respect is part of the reason that conflicts escalate. For those involved in conflict it seems as though an attack on them acts to disrespect them in a way that provokes people to physical action. Respect has a sort of symbiotic relationship with goading. In fact, goading is in part a mechanism by which disrespect of the one or both of the people involved is attacked on a personal level with the goal of provoking a physical fight. For the person goading perhaps the intent is somewhat unclear although they play a crucial role in escalating the conflict.

In what follows, I first explore the triggers for interpersonal conflicts surrounding romantic relationships and how these conflicts are shaped by gender. I then discuss the triggers for conflicts involving crew loyalty. For both types of conflicts, I discuss how goading by bystanders escalate verbal conflicts into physical ones. By way of race, I

found that the overarching pillars of race and racism are present in these conflicts in that racial slurs and derogatory language are employed in the verbal conflicts. However, the use of these words seems to be more a way of insulting one another as opposed to expressions of racism.

Based on my interviews with students 34 of the 40 students interviewed (or 85%) reported witnessing violent incidents. Of the 34 students who reported and described violent incidents at school, 26 of them (76%) indicated that at least one of the conflicts they witnessed was inter-racial. Although the focus of the interviews was on inter-racial conflicts among students, nearly as many (twenty-four students) described incidents of intra-racial violence. Prior to conducting interviews I spent a number of hours observing outside the schools that my respondents attended. My goal was to get a visual account of the interactions that took place before and after school between black and Latino students.

Observations of the school grounds revealed that students did interact interracially before and after school. Although most students seemed to mingle and associate with other students of the same race, there were enough interracial groups and interactions to indicate that students were friendly and comfortable with students of other races. Girls interacted with girls of other races more than boys did and in general, girls interactions appeared more intimate than boys' interactions. Girls stood closer together and made physical contact with each other than boys did. This was true of both interracial and intraracial interactions.

**Gender and Interpersonal Conflicts about Romantic Partners**

Most of the conflicts among students described in the interviews tended to be of an interpersonal nature. The most common reason for fights that were witnessed by the interviewees stemmed from jealousy and possessiveness over an actual or potential romantic partner. This was true in the case of both male and female participants in the fights described. Respondents frequently explained that the fights they witnessed were over a significant other. This was also the case in incidents that involved students both interracially and intraracially. I first describe the interpersonal conflicts among girls and then those among boys, noting gender differences in how these conflicts were expressed.

Charity recalls that the fight she witnessed between two girls (one Black and one Latina) was over a boy that one of them was dating: "the [black] girl I knew said she saw that girl trying to get close to her man." As the tension escalated, Charity explained, the girls used racial slurs to insult one another until they finally started "throwing blows." This was also the case in the incident described by Betty. She explained that "these two girls in the bathroom started fighting when one of them said she had 'messed around' with the boyfriend of the other girl." This incident was between two Latinas who used gendered epithets such as "bitch," "slut," and "whore" to insult each other until the physical fight broke out.

LaShawn described a fight between girls who were simply romantically interested in the same boy. She explained that although neither girl was his girlfriend, they both felt as though they had a claim on him. LaShawn laughed as she described the two girls insulting one another, saying that this boy would not be interested in a girl that had "no

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tits and no ass" because she looked like a boy. These insults revolved around standards of

female beauty and sexual desirability rather than race. Although this was a verbal fight

between girls of different races, the harshest attacks were gendered in nature. Insults

directed toward the African American girls utilized an intersection of gendered and racial

insults. So she was called a "black bitch" that had "horse hair" referring to her hair

extensions. Again, LaShawn explained that this insult was a "pretty low blow cause horse

hair is cheap and doesn't look good…black girls feel like that's saying she poor on top of

everything else."

Betty also revealed another precursor to the physical outburst between these girls

as she admitted that she goaded the girls on in the fight. She said "when [the girl I knew]

called that girl a whore I was yelling 'slap her, slap that bitch!'" This was reported by a

number of respondents who witnessed fights break out between individuals. The by-

stander would get involved and provoke the two who were arguing by encouraging a

physical confrontation. Interviewees were not commonly the by-stander that did the

provocation but they did witness this behavior in about eight of ten cases where a by-

stander was present at the beginning of a physical incident.

Similar dynamics were revealed in the cases of conflict among two males.

Respondents noted that when males were initiating conflict they also were most often

fighting over a romantic partner or girlfriend. Although it was far less frequent than it

was for females, boys often started the conflict when they felt the other boy was either

interested in or disrespecting his girlfriend. Interviewees reported this in 4 of the 8

interpersonal fights they described between boys. Like the female fights, these fights

were egged on in a similar fashion by bystanders. Again, in half (4 of the 8) fights reported, a by-stander got involved in the name calling prior to the physical part of the fight beginning. In some reports students believed that the romantic partner was used as an excuse to start the fight. Three respondents indicated that they felt the boys who fought simply did not like each other or that they had some unfinished argument to settle. When probed one boy indicated that he overheard the boys in class bickering over a backpack. This conflict was interracial, involving a black and a Latino, but they were arguing in class because one had kicked the other's backpack while it was sitting in the aisle. "The Mexican kid kicked it 'cause he said he couldn't get through without kicking it." This conflict began as a continuation of that classroom conflict then escalated as the Mexican boy spoke derogatorily about the other boy's girlfriend. The respondent indicates that he believed the disrespect of the other's girlfriend was simply a way to provoke and continue what had started in the classroom. "It's like disrespecting someone's mother with 'yo mama' jokes he says. He might have let the backpack thing go, but you can't back down when someone slams your girl."

Boys also fought for other interpersonal reasons. In one case, a fight broke out between two boys due to an ongoing antagonism between them. Rene described an incident between boys that stemmed from a previous incident of bullying. He explained "these guys had been go[ing] back and forth in our class all the time" he continued "that homie [a Latino boy] was always getting in this guy's face and one day he just popped!...when homie hit him up this time, that guy just started swinging, and it was on!"

This was a unique case among the others in that the use of insulting language was not part of the conflict.

It became evident when comparing the reports of fights between girls and fights between boys that respondents noted that verbal insults were far more frequent and plentiful when girls were in conflict. This is because during conflict between males they seek to protect their respect physically earlier on in the exchange. Jose explains that the fight he witnessed resulted in a physical fight after only a few insults were exchanged while the fight between girls that he witnessed took a much longer time to develop. "The girls were saying things to each other and so was the crowd [around them]…people even started to leave but then they finally started pushing so I stayed to watch" he explained.

The difference between male and female conflicts as they escalate to physical fights is consistent with hegemonic masculinity. Boys are interested in preserving their levels of dominance; they display a heterosexual, tough, take-charge, ineffectual attitude. Alternatively, girls' engagement in conflict contradicts the traditional gender role expectations of women to be cooperative and nurturing. Respondents also revealed that girls were more likely to admit that a romantic relationship was part of the reason for the conflict to begin.

**Goading as a Non-gendered Influence**

Goading was found to play an important role in the fights between both girls and boys and was reported in approximately 90% of all the incidents described by respondents. Goading here refers to the words and actions that by-standers used to encourage verbal fights to become physical fights. Goading occurred in all fights that

were described by respondents who reported both interracial and intraracial fights. In each case the respondent either admitted to be the person who did the goading or reported witnessing someone else do so.

The goading behaviours that were described are best understood as provocative words or actions that intensify the hostility between the individuals who eventually engaged in physical fighting with one another. In most cases, this took the form of words that encouraged and inflamed the people involved in the conflict. The words used ranged from "oohs" and "awes" to more direct comments like "don't let her talk to you like that" to actual commands such as "hit him!" or "knock her out!" As an important part of the escalating conflict, goading seems to represent a form of peer pressure that prevents the two people in conflict from de-escalating the situation and avoiding physical fighting. In many instances, respondents described situations where the verbal fight did not seem to be leading to physical confrontations; they suggested that the goading ultimately seemed to be responsible for inciting the physical part of the fight.  For example, Aaron describes a fight in which he was responsible for goading the individuals who were fighting. He says "they were just talking smack and insulting each other and my friend looked scared so I told him 'just knock him out' so he did." Although Aaron is quite frank in describing his role in encouraging the physical part of the fight he witnessed, others report less direct forms of goading. James explains that he and the others watching a conflict between two other boys were gasping and laughing at the insults that the boys were using against each other. "When he said that [expletive] we just all started laughing and saying 'oh damn!!!' and so homie just started swinging…he was embarrassed y'know."  The goading

evidently increases the feeling of personal humiliation of the person being publicly insulted and their desire to physically punish the person insulted them or their loved ones.

The same was true of students who witnessed fights between girls. Regardless of the reported reasons for the initial conflict, nearly all the fights between girls that were reported included goading by on-lookers in one way or another. LaShawn explains that she told her friend that she "had her back" meaning that LaShawn would be there to prevent her friend from getting too injured. "I didn't want her [to] be scared of that chick cause I was there and would step in if I had to." LaShawn indicates that this friend was a part of her "crew" and so she would not allow any fight to result in this girl being seriously injured or even embarrassed from getting beat up in a fight. This incident reveals how group membership influences violent escalation.

So goading plays an important role in the escalation of verbal fighting as it encourages those involved to engage in physical fighting. In some cases, it creates an atmosphere of pressure in which the students in conflict feel they must act to resolve the conflict with physical fighting as opposed to verbal fighting alone. Goading is also a factor in fights that result in large numbers of participants joining into the fight. In these rare instances, goading individuals were described as not only pressuring the pair to fight but actually joining in the verbal and physical act of fighting. Although there was a separate cause for the disagreement to begin, it was the goading that seemed to escalate the conflict into a physical fight. Chardra recalls an instance when the person goading on two boys "actually threw the first punch." She went on to explain how she saw this third boy begin joining his friend in the verbal assault and then saw him start hitting the boy

with whom his friend was fighting. This fight was one of the biggest fights reported in these interviews with Chandra describing dozens and dozens of students joining in. She described what she called a "free for all" fight where people did not even know who they were hitting or why they were hitting them. What started out as a disagreement over a look that one boy gave another (perceived to be insulting) ended up a sort of school riot. The administration later described the event as a "race related riot" that resulted in the students being subjected to an assembly about racial tolerance and acceptance. For Chandra and some of her friends, the added security measures that the school imposed, unfairly punished students who actively avoided engaging in the violence. Her take on goading is that it is the actual goading behavior that should receive the harshest punishment. She sees it as the real trigger to violent outbreaks at school.

**Crews**

In some cases, the violence that was witnessed at school stemmed from loyalty to a group that students called "a crew," that existed in and beyond the school grounds. Crews were not originally a topic of interest to this research, but every respondent mentioned that crews were a common aspect of student life. Only a small minority of respondents did not mention that crews were part of their high school's landscape. The existence of crews in schools is a fairly old phenomenon although the term *crew* is recent; formerly, such groups were known as *clique*s. Respondents describe crews as gang-like but not as gangs. Compared to gangs, crews seem to be far less formal and employ far less serious forms of delinquency. Crews form around particular interests. These activities range from the most benign types of activities, like interest in a certain

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genre of movie or types of dancing, to more risky interests, like raves, to more delinquent behaviour, such as street racing and tagging. Because they form around particular interests, they are not necessarily racially homogeneous although some of them are centered on ethnic interests such as music. In these cases, the crew may consist largely of students of one race however, interviewees indicated that the shared interest of crew-members superseded race as a criteria for membership. Unlike gangs, crews do not have the rigid rules with their members. Instead, crews are groups of people who "hang out" together at school and beyond the school grounds. Additionally, respondents indicate that there are no rigid rules about race and membership in these crews so they are often interracial in membership. Of the crews referred to in interviews, nearly all of them were described as interracial and as having both male and female members. So, while crews represent a source of peer pressure that sometimes calls for physically defending their reputation, they are not entities that require strict adherence to rules and regulations that traditional gangs impose. Still, the dependence on crews for a sense of belonging and support and the resulting status that comes from the crew seems to mirror that which is found among gang members. Respondents who reported being part of crew in high school indicate that those crew members are the friends that they still interact with currently. They describe feelings of intense loyalty that they have imposed on themselves, not that the crew has imposed upon them. They use words like "family" to describe the members, despite referring to the crew in the past tense. They also indicate that many of the dating relationships they had in high school and those they engage in currently stem from their former crew memberships. For respondents that reported not

being part of a crew, there was a tendency to describe crews as "gangs that were not really gangs."

The majority of respondents indicated that crew loyalty played a role in both the initial conflicts emerging but more importantly in the use of goading during the verbal portion of the conflicts. Only tagging crews were identified as an influential source of violence. More commonly, crew membership and activities provide a more specific way to insult someone. With knowledge of the type of crew someone belongs to an enemy or partner in conflict has information that is more personal to you. For instance, Adela explains that she belonged to a crew whose interests revolved around low riders. She explains that if someone were to start a verbal argument with her, they would likely insult her personally, but also insult her crew by disrespecting their interests. When asked why attacking the interests of her crew would provoke her, she explains that it would be an insult to her and the people she calls friends. "Sometimes," she says, "you don't care what people say about you but when they insult your friends or your family, you're more angry about it." She touches on an idea that resonates with anyone who holds loyalties to a sports team or school or even a little league team.

In approximately five incidents, crews or crew loyalty were identified as the cause for conflicts to emerge between students. Janine explains that she witnessed a fight between two girls from different crews over which one was most popular. Each girl was arguing that their crew was invited to a party being thrown by a popular crew of boys. They each spoke of how they were co-sponsoring the event and how the other crew of girls was "butting in trying to steal the show." Janine explains that the girls insulted each

other personally but that they also insulted each other's crews. The physical violence, Janine explains, was in response to the insults to one of the girl's crew rather than the personal insults that were used. Although it is important to note that it is not the crew that requires members to physically defend the reputation of the crew, many members take it upon themselves to do so.

In another incident, crew membership and loyalty was even more influential in a physically violent fight. Janine described another fight wherein, the crew was actually expecting one of its members to fight a member of another crew. She explains that this altercation occurred between two boys, one black and one Latino. The Latino boy's crew was comprised of both black and Latino boys. There was no evidence offered to suggest that this was a racially motivated fight since both black and Latino boys provoked the two boys involved. The fight, she explains, was about tagging that both groups conducted outside in the surrounding neighborhood. The problem was not what the tags said or meant but over which crew was more prolific and creative in where the tags were placed. As the two boys argued over which crew had the best locations, one of the boys from the interracial crew explained to his fellow member that he could not allow this "punk" to continue to insult their crew. For the boy involved in the conflict, a call to loyalty to the crew resulted in an outburst of physical violence that Janine believes would not have occurred had crew loyalty not been called into question.

**Conclusion**

Conflicts among students at school were reported to mostly stem from an interpersonal conflict rather than a racial conflict. With respect to interracial fighting,

respondents indicated that those conflicts were also of an interpersonal nature. Most of the fights between people of different races were about conflict over a romantic partner and in a few cases resulted out of other antagonisms between individuals. This was true for both males and females in conflict. While female fights were more likely to start over a romantic partner or interest, boys fought over a romantic partner or interest and over things like disrespect more generally.

The role of goading in the escalation of fighting at school cannot be ignored. Goading was identified as an important contributing factor in a verbal argument resulting in a physical fight. Goading included everything from reactions to what the two people are saying to each other to taunting words of their own to initiating the physical part of the fight themselves. Goading also emerges in cases where people in conflict are members of a crew. Crews were also influential in the conflicts that were reported in that crews' interests are often the target of insults and goading.

Despite the fact that the fights reported were not initiated by racial tension or conflict specifically, the use of goading did incorporated the use of racial slurs (and gender slurs). School staff and administrators tend to focus on the racial aspects of the conflicts rather than the actual triggers of the conflicts. This racialization is especially relevant in dictating the direction of the response made to the conflict. Unfortunately, because the focus tends to be on the racial aspects of the conflict school officials' responses often miss the mark in responding to it. The data collected for this project contradict the media's and school officials' characterization of these conflicts. Rather than ignore the students' understandings and interpretations of the triggers of conflict,

school officials would make more meaningful changes to policies and procedures by actively soliciting students' for information about a meaningful response. The most ignored and most salient trigger has been largely overlooked. Disrespect and the attempt to maintain ones' self-respect are at the root of all conflicts whether they begin over a romantic partner or a crew or are expressed through racial slurs, the consistent dimension of feeling disrespected and wanting to protect the respect of oneself, one's loved, or one's crew emerges in respondents' accounts of the incidents. Without directly addressing this crucial factor, the reduction of violent incidents seems unlikely.

**Chapter 3: Schools' Responses to Student Conflict**

**Introduction**

When news spreads of violent incidents in schools populated mainly by Black and Latino students, people often assume that they are racially based. The students that I interviewed for this study do not fully support this assumption. Instead, they point to interpersonal strife as the main source of conflicts among students in school. Unfortunately, the faculty and administrative response to these incidents tends to focus on racial dynamics at school thereby overlooking more suitable approaches to contending with student conflict

This chapter discusses the institutional response to conflicts among students and students' assessments about the effectiveness of these approaches. My interviewees described three general types of institutional responses to violent conflicts among students: 1) preaching racial tolerance, 2) increasing surveillance and restricting and denying access to school facilities, and 3) responding only to the individuals directly involved in the conflict. Of these three general types of responses, the most common response identified and described by students was preaching racial tolerance. The second most commonly described type was increased surveillance and restricting and denying access to school facilities and the third most commonly described response was to just respond to the individuals involved. Students explained that of these three responses, the first and second were influenced by parents and community members. The effectiveness of these responses varied based on what the students actually perceived to be the root cause of the violent incident. Overall, the third response, responding solely to the

individuals directly involved in the conflict, was the most effective response described in interviews.

**Racialized Student Violence**

Despite the outcome—an escalation into a virtual student riot, or an end to a fight between two individuals—when the fight involved students of different racial make-up, the schools' responses tended to highlight the racial dynamics of the conflict. This approach by the institution is best described as a racialization of student violence. It is assumed by school administrators that when Black and Latino students fight, it must be about racial differences. In some ways, this assumption is logical in that faculty and staff witness not only the racial slurs that are used during a fight, but they are also witness to its use in everyday non-violent conflicts and even in friendly interactions. What cannot be ignored is that students who use racist language do not share the same understanding of what those words mean. Still students report that the responses by the school seem to approach all of the incidents in a general way as opposed to one that directly addresses what happened between the students.  Students' descriptions of the schools' response to violent incidents can be generally categorized into three themes.

The first theme involves school officials' "preaching" racial tolerance to the students.  This was the case in approximately 50% of the incidents described. In fact, this was the response offered even in cases where the violence was intra-racial. It was also the response in cases of what students described as interpersonal conflict (i.e. friends who got mad at each other or fighting over boyfriends/girlfriends). In these accounts, students described student assemblies that they were required to attend where faculty and

administrators spoke about racial tolerance. Although the faculty and administrators were racially diverse in about 50% of the cases, students did not mention that it was relevant to their assessment of the situation or its usefulness of their approach to addressing the problem. In another school, students were led into a discussion about racial tolerance in their homeroom class. Still in others, students were asked to write about racial discrimination that they had personally experienced. While students had no notable problem with the content of this material, they did explain that they thought it brought race to the fore as a reason for the violence.

In most cases, students thought it was a waste of time to "preach" racial tolerance to Black and Latino students who interact with each other every day at school and at home and in their communities. As one student put it "we are racially tolerant already, we go to school together, we go out with each other, and we live near each other." But in some cases, students reported that highlighting the racial aspects of conflict made race more important than it really was. That it made them notice race more than they had prior to the response. It is likely that students are hesitant to admit their own or their friends' racist attitudes but it should be recognized that racism has shaped how they choose to insult one another in times of conflict. So racism plays a role in that way however, it is a less salient role than the schools are reacting to. This is clear in that intraracial conflicts students use the same racial slurs as are used in interracial conflicts.

It is now common in public high schools to find police officers and surveillance cameras (see Kupchik 2009; Hirschfield 2008; Simon 2007; Reyes 2006; Noguera 2003; Skiba and Noam 2002; Casella 2001) and it is exactly this type of increased surveillance,

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restriction of movement and denial of access to school facilities that emerged as the second type of response to student violence. In response to violent incidents at school the institution increased its level of restrictions in some or all of the following ways: 1) they increased surveillance, 2) they restricted or increased restriction of students' movement on school grounds and 3) they reduced access or completely denied access to certain school facilities. For some students, the increase of surveillance meant that they were no longer allowed to enter school grounds without being patted down or have their backpacks checked. For others, whose schools already subjected them to pat downs and bag checks, there was an implementation of devices such as metal detectors added to the surveillance regiment.

For students who had never been subjected to them before, pat downs were described in two general ways. Some students felt safer because they believed that it would be difficult for weapons to be brought to school and this lessened their chances of being stabbed or shot in an altercation. Other students viewed the increased surveillance as unnecessary and overly intrusive. These students did not observe weapons during the violent incidents they witnessed. These students also mentioned that when fights did occur and there were weapons involved, they were "things you get at school, like a pencil or a chair…" When asked why they believed the increased surveillance was imposed, there was agreement, (even across campuses) that the school felt pressure from parents and school district administrators to "do something." Two students spoke about the same incident and the way that the fight was portrayed in the meeting with parents and community members. Crystal explained "…my mom said that people in the town were

scared to take their kids back to school and that made me scared to go too…so the school said they would make it safer." In her case, the school replaced the random bag checks they underwent prior to entering school grounds with mandatory bag checks. Their bags would also be checked not just when they arrived to school but also during classes. She described how teachers would randomly ask you to dump out your bag. When asked about lockers, this student said that they were no longer allowed to use lockers and when they did use lockers, school police or administrators did random checks of those too.

Other examples of increased surveillance include, metal detecting scanners either handheld or walk through. The students who were subjected to this type of surveillance described the process as laborious in that it took a great deal of time to enter the school grounds. Their greatest frustration seemed to be that the process of being scanned and the ensuing follow-up checks of students who set off the alarm often made them late for class. Tardiness was a significant concern since students are referred for disciplinary action for excessive tardiness. For students whose schools utilized punishments such as "probation" and imposed other types of prison-like punishments, this was a slippery slope. "It's hard to stay out of trouble that way" as one student explained, "because then you can't make any mistakes or you'll get citations and it's really hard to do good." His concerns were not uncommon, particularly among male students. Although a number of respondents described how they did not care about getting into trouble at school, most of them expressed a desire to stay out of trouble especially with school police.

The second way that schools responded to violent incidents in school was to restrict the movement of students while on school grounds. Spatial regulation was a key

component of efforts to maintain order and exercise social control (Beckett and Herbert 2010; Kedar 1996; Herbert 1997; Bauman 2000; Foucault 2003). Sometimes this meant that students were no longer allowed in certain areas of the school during nutrition or lunch time. They described being restricted to a small area that was heavily monitored by faculty and school police and security. Despite the heavy surveillance, about half of the fights that students described occurred during these times. Their thoughts about why the fights occurred at these times were that this was when they saw each other or had the most interpersonal interactions. One respondent went so far as to say that the fight she witnessed would not have happened if the students weren't forced to be in the same area during lunch. She said that one of the boys who fought "used to hang out with his crew next to the field but after a big fight, they closed off the lunch area and we can only eat there." She continued "those two didn't like each other and we all knew that, but then they always had to see each other and it was just a matter of time before they would fight." Lunch and nutrition area restrictions were the most frequently reported types of restriction on movements. Some students reported that following a fight that they were no longer allowed to leave the school campus for lunch. One reported that they were no longer allowed to leave the classroom for any reason including the use of the restroom. Others reported that school police became far stricter about checking hall passes and doled out harsher punishments when the proper pass was not given. For one student that meant the she would serve three days of detention rather than a simple warning for a first time infraction of the rule.

Deprivation of liberty, in terms of criminal justice, includes both the restricted movement and social isolation so restriction of movement was coupled with being cut off from family, relatives, and friends (Beckett and Herbert 2010; Sykes 1958) comparably, respondents explained that the restriction of their movements on certain parts of campus prevented them from associating with friends with whom they were most comfortable while simultaneously being forced into contact with those who they did not get along with. Charity explains: "When they stopped us from going to certain places at lunch it was based on our grade… I was a junior so I couldn't go with my senior friends to eat. I was there with all the girls I didn't know and some that I didn't like. I could have easily got angry and started a fight and some other girls did do that."

The consequences of this spatial and social restriction were commonly seen as objectionable not only for limiting students' movements but also because of its symbolic meaning. For these students, the restriction of movement meant that they were being punished for something that they did not do (participate in a violent act). They felt that they were no longer allowed to exercise agency over their own movements and they resented this.

A subset of students whose movement was restricted also reported being denied access to certain school facilities. This smaller subset described a fight that occurred in the girls' bathroom where girls from all over the school were sent to use one bathroom. As a result, there were long lines and frustration that built as the girls waited their turn. Girls that would otherwise not see each other because they were located on different parts of the campus at that time or because they could have chosen to use a different bathroom

to avoid one another- were forced into the same bathroom at the same time. As they waited, they began arguing over a romantic partner and a physical fight resulted. Because of this fight these students understood that they were not allowed to go to that restroom any more. They explained in somewhat exasperated tones that when they had to use the restroom, all but this one girls' restroom were locked. Their understanding was that they were only to use the restroom that was being monitored by a female school security guard at all times. For the students that attended this school, this topic came up in a number of contexts. For most of them, this was the greatest inconvenience of all the increased restrictions following the fight. Even the male students that attended this campus were aware of the restriction. They indicated that the girls they knew were very upset that the only restroom to which they had access was on the other side of campus or that it was so crowded that it became dirty and ran out of toilet paper so that it was often unusable. Girls waiting for the restroom were described as frustrated and worse yet, that it was impossible to avoid. One of the students from this campus was also very upset about being told that if they complained, they might not have any restroom to use. Clearly this response by the school was misguided. The school officials' response to the violent conflict failed to address the true reason for the problem, in this case an interpersonal argument between two girls over a boy. The increased surveillance and restriction of students' movements had a limited effect on students' decision-making (Farrell 2010; Farrell et al 2008).

The physical restrictions of movement on campus cannot go unnoticed. This restriction of movement is often neglected in the prisonization of schools literature, but it

is a significant component of that process. Prison is in many ways a restriction of movement and so the use of this type of discipline, not just on the students who were fighting, but on all students on campus is significant. In fact, for the students who were not fighting these restrictions represented an injustice imposed on them. Again, these restrictions were often reported to be the schools' response to what parents and community members felt necessary to respond to fights at schools. For the students, they represented an oppressive and unfair punishment. The denial of access to school facilities (especially bathrooms) was most troubling in their reports. This type of restriction is easily compared to what Goffman (1971) described as the "pains of imprisonment." Moreover, students reported evidence that this denial of access to space and other school facilities encouraged more violent conflicts to occur since students were not able to avoid students with whom they did not like.

In approximately 50% of the cases, following an outbreak of violence at school, students reported that the school responded only to the students directly involved in the conflict. These students as well as those mentioned above described both intra-racial and inter-racial fights. For students who reported that the school only responded to the individuals involved, there was agreement that there was no escalation of violence as a result. They also reported that they continued to feel safe both in around school despite there being no new rules imposed on the general student body and no collective assembly held to discuss the conflict. An overall sentiment echoed in student responses was the community and parent involvement in influencing how the school responded to violent incidents at school. In the case of increased surveillance at school, students agreed that

these new practices were spurred on by the outrage and concern of parents and community members who attended meetings held by school districts. These were more general meetings with the parents and community that took on the topics and challenges the school faced throughout the month. In three cases, special meetings were called in response to violence that occurred at school. Although student knowledge of what occurred at these meetings is largely second hand, they express their opinions with a great deal of certainty. "Oh yeah, they did it because the parents said they were going to put their kids in charter schools so they'll be safer" one student explained as he described the restricted bathroom access at his school. He goes on, "parents thought that the bathroom was a place for their daughters to get raped or beat because of the fights that happened there…" He explained that his mother had attended the school board meeting and that a number of parents had planned on bringing up the fights at his school there. The belief was similar about the imposition of metal detectors and bag checks. One student explained that because the fight she witnessed was reported in the news and that parents and church members were talking about it. "They talked about it at church that they were going to make sure that the school did something."

**Conclusion**

The accounts of violence and the response to them by schools tended to fall into three general types. The first was for the school to strongly encourage racial tolerance. For most students this approach was out of place because they felt as though they lived and interacted with people of different races in their daily lives. For them, this meant that they had little or no need to tolerate people with whom they had friends. Although racism

is reflected in the slurs used to insult one another, these slurs racialize conflict in both interracial and intraracial exchanges. Instead, they felt as though the incidents of violence were not racially motivated and in some cases the introduction of the idea of racial intolerance put the idea of racial strife into the foreground where it had not been before. In fact, some of the student believed that these discussions did not go far enough in explaining race or racial conflict so they left students to "fill in the blanks." In other words, students were not given time to explore ideas about race in a setting that allowed them to ask questions or interact with administrators or anyone about the way that race and racism affect their lives.

The second type of response was increased surveillance, restriction and denial of access to school facilities. In some cases, this involved restricting students' movement about campus. In extreme cases, it involved restricting them partially or completely from school facilities, namely, the school bathrooms. In the example of restricting students' movements, the restricted areas in which students were forced to gather triggered additional problems in that they were forced to interact because of the limited area available. Prior to the restrictions, the students mentioned would have been in different areas. Students whose bathroom use was restricted and others on the same campus who were not affected (male students) were by and large the most expressive about the lack of fairness in the imposition of the change in rules.

The third type of response was to not respond publicly to the incident. Direct response was described as the school punishing only the students who were directly involved in fighting. Students whose school administrators did nothing to change the

rules at school expressed contentment with how the incident was handled and did not report any further incidents of violence.

All of the students interviewed held similar attitudes about the imposition of rules and the responses of their schools to the incidents of violence. They all accepted the changes to their school routines as something beyond their ability to resist even when they expressed dissatisfaction with the new rules. The information provided by students in these interviews indicate that the main causes of student conflict is of a more interpersonal nature than a racial conflict problem. Because students report that the school's response was most often ineffectual, it is likely that a better response to violence at school should address students' assessments of what the cause of the incident was and what they feel would best address the issues at hand. Students have a clear understanding about why fights occur and so their input as to how the school should respond is essential in a meaningful and impactful response. Although it is common for people to want to be respected the broader social conditions have placed these students, their friends, their families, their schools and even their communities in a position where respect is scarce. They lack material signs of success and are aware of their positions. What is evident is that the social conditions that feed student conflict can be addressed by the school in a more effective way if they had a better gage on the actual causes for the conflicts.

## Chapter 4: The Prisonization of Schools

**Introduction**

Since schools continue to be the primary location for young people to prepare for their adult lives, it is important to examine the transformation that schools have undergone in becoming more like prison. Historically, the public educational system and prisons were institutions that, at least ideologically, were portrayed as fulfilling oppositional roles in society. Public education was touted as the great equalizer since it was universally accessible and it has long been considered the most effective routes for poor people of color to change their plight in life. As such, education is believed to be an institution that provides opportunities and opens doors that would have otherwise been closed to students of color. In contrast, prisons represent an institution that inhibits the ability of individuals to achieve the so-called American dream (Weissman 2008).

For poor children, particularly poor children of color, the idea that school represents an avenue for upward social mobility has always been laden with contradiction since the resource-poor schools that they tend to attend often fail to foster such achievements. Instead, the schools that children of color are immersed in are more likely to be characterized by resource constraints. And, increasingly, such schools have adopted policies and practices that help to prepare them for prisons (Dunbar and Villaruel 2002; Weissman 2008).

This chapter explores the ways that public schools promote the "school-to-prison pipeline" where "the junctures throughout the educational experience [have] moved from education and graduation to incarceration" (Weissman 2008, 6). I also examine how

public school students in Southern California have come to interact and understand their schools in light of this atmosphere. The latter includes, but is not limited to, school practices and procedures of "zero-tolerance" towards deviant behavior such as the construction of prison-like walls and fences, pat downs and bag checks, probation and other disciplinary actions up to and including arrests by police.

In my own observations of L.A public high schools, I wanted to see for myself what the physical structures of the campus, its buildings and the surrounding neighbourhoods might add to my understanding. The campuses physical structures were telling more in their organization and the policing of them than in the individual buildings themselves. For instance, one school that I observed had only one official entrance and exit. Although there were emergency exit in case of an emergency, the standard practice for this campus was to allow students, teachers and any other person who was coming or going to use the single entrance. For most of the day, a single entrance on this campus was not a problem but there were most visibly problems with this practice in the morning when most students were trying to get to school. The single entrance meant that hundreds, if not thousands of students had stand in long lines to enter their school They did this under the surveillance of a number of school police who were checking to see that they dressed appropriately. Upon entering, students were randomly subjected to pat downs and bag searches. As one might imagine, it took a significant amount of time for students to get onto campus.

Observations on this and other campuses revealed that there is a similarity with respect to the way the campuses are secured by walls and/or fences. What is most telling

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is that the campuses employed the use of significantly high walls or fences in the closing off of the school campuses. Students discussed the walls and fences at their schools in their interviews. Importantly, they expressed a certain degree of surprise in our interviews that they had not given much thought to them until they were asked. Understandably, the schools must secure campuses to keep students safe however, important details about the fences in particular are telling. The fences were observed (and later described) as being unusually tall. In all cases they were at least ten feet tall and in most cases the curve at the top of the fence was toward the interior of the campus. This seems to indicate that students are being kept in rather than dangerous elements being kept out.

**Zero-Tolerance**

The historical goal of school discipline is threefold: to keep students and staff safe; to maintain school decorum; and to develop students' character. While many schools' discipline policies are created and exacted with this spirit in mind, there are also those that focus very narrowly on police presence and exclusionary zero tolerance rules; they are at odds with the historical goals of school discipline (Beale 2009; Cobb, 2009; Kajs 2006). The "zero-tolerance" security policies grew more and more harsh beginning in the 1990s in response to politicians' attention and media focus on a few high-profile incidents of juvenile crime. These incidents were otherwise commonplace (e.g. fights and vandalism) but caught the attention of concerned parents and community members. Despite the fact that these were rare and isolated cases, the attention was enough to generate moral panic and outrage in communities, especially among parents of school children and those living near public schools. The reality was that it was not violent

students of color in city schools that were behaving criminally; rather it was "white students in predominately rural and suburban areas who in fact committed the high profile violent crimes that received the most press coverage at this time" (Giroux 2003). Nevertheless, statistically speaking, the most excessive use of policing and enforcement of zero-tolerance occurs in schools populated by Black and Latino students (Ibid.).

As a policy embraced across the country, zero-tolerance was once limited to enforcement of the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994. This law was intended to support the three-strikes policies imposed in the criminal justice system and was more specifically focused on those students who brought guns to school. As time passed, zero tolerance policies expanded to cover a wide range of behaviors including behavioral issues such as drug use or possession to verbally threatening another student (Giroux 2003). While zero-tolerance policies represent a threat to all youth as a device that reinforces the moral panic around youth misbehavior, they are also well-suited for "mobilizing racialized codes and race-based moral panics that portray black and brown urban youth as a frightening and violent threat to the safety of 'decent' Americans" (Giroux 2003: 562). By offering oversimplified solutions to complex problems this policy has transformed into a way to remove kids from school rather than creating a safe environment for them. Zero-tolerance policies thus feed into the fears of the community and parents. The spread of these policies has helped to make schools comparable to a prison and into extensions of the criminal justice system. Schools, as they employ and continue to enforce zero-tolerance policies, have rationalized the use of criminal legislation and punishments on the very students they have a duty to serve and to protect.

The school-to-prison pipeline is a relatively new concept used to describe the manner in which public schools have shifted in their roles in the lives of students of color and poor students. The concept critically and logically links two of the most crucial institutions in the United States. While sentiments and beliefs about public education as a great equalizer have always been somewhat idealized, the basic function of education remains twofold; one is to teach knowledge and skills, and the other is the cultural transmission of values. These two functions are central to the manner in which the school to prison pipeline works in closing off opportunities to students of color. Consider the use of discipline in the form of detention, suspension, and expulsion. By providing a constraining and repressive atmosphere to students whose opportunities are already limited by a lack of resources and personal ties to the middle and upper classes, public schools help to transmit messages about students' lack of potential and that imply the skills they do have are of little or no value. These messages contribute to their inability to thrive in U.S. society. Instead it has more of a tendency to transmit values that groom them for prison. Wald and Losen (2003) explain that the metaphor of the pipeline helps to describe the intersection of the American education and criminal justice systems, each of which exercises immense power over the life chances of poor youth of color.

Zero tolerance is the dominant form of school discipline in today's public schools. Coming to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, zero-tolerance emerged as the "get-tough" approach in schools that mirrored the "tough on crime" approach in criminal justice. It appealed to (and still appeals to) those who feel that school violence has worsened. Zero tolerance has two primary components: detection and punishment.

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Detection takes the form of surveillance, ranging from adult hall monitors, police, and professional security guards to video cameras, metal detectors, locker searches, and other practices common to prisons (Adams 2000: 146). While some argue that these tactics represent a proactive approach on the part of school administration (Hylton 1996), the outcome of these practices is problematic.

Punishment most often involves practices of exclusion including suspension or expulsion. Adams (2000) outlines six problems stemming from the exclusionary practices associated with zero-tolerance policies in school that are especially pertinent for students at LAASD. First, students removed from school are often those most in need of education. Second, exclusionary practices represent punishment comparable to those doled out in courts but they do not provide the due process that a court trial would provide. "There is no statement of the allegations filed against the student, no hearing, and no appeals process" (Adams 2000). Third, this approach to school discipline does not require the school to provide nurturing, caring, or mentoring that groom students to be responsible, civically-minded adults.  Next, this approach is perhaps unintentionally racist. The goal of swiftly removing serious "offenders" results in higher rates of removing students of color from school as they are more likely than white students to carry firearms (Mercy and Rosenberg, 1998). The reasons for carrying these weapons are not the concern of those who enforce zero-tolerance so despite the fact that zero-tolerance is to be upheld regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation. Fifth, because of the "tough on crime" nature of zero-tolerance, minor offenses result in students' removal from school. Discipline then becomes a tool of the teacher to control

the classroom rather than developing more constructive ways to manage the classroom. Indeed, to rest the responsibility of managing teenagers on teachers is possibly the most unrealistic aspect of high school life.

The American Psychological Association found that zero-tolerance increased bad behavior without creating a safer environment in terms of violent incidents at school (2006). Other research has also found little evidence that zero-tolerance policies actually reduce the rate of violence in schools (Skiba 1999: 376; National Center for Education Statistics 2003; Weismann 2008).

Also troubling, the use of zero tolerance within schools mirrors inequalities in the larger society. The racial and class inequalities of the communities and states in which they exist are all too apparent within the school walls. The quality of school structures, text books, and even the disciplinary approaches of teachers who are in the classrooms vary with the economic and racial make-up of the surrounding communities. In other words, schools in lower income areas are more likely to have greater numbers of students of color and are more likely to exclude students using zero-tolerance and criminal justice style techniques that discipline students outside the school campus rather than to use the school as the location where discipline is administered. (Adams 1994).

One reason for this happening in many urban schools is the lower proportions of teachers with advanced degrees and certification as well as fewer support staff like social workers and school psychologists. Additionally, there is less money for conflict resolution and mediation training for teachers. Frustrated, scared and under-supported, many teachers in such schools are clearly happy to use zero-tolerance as a tool rather than

devoting time and energy to motivate and assist students they perceive as not emotionally or academically prepared for school. For these students, and the classrooms they tend to occupy, techniques like "cooperative discipline" are not the common goal (Bluestein 1988). Cooperative discipline "expands the leadership roles in the classroom from just teacher to a combination of students and the teacher. It provides all students the opportunity to become leaders. Students are partners and stakeholders in the classroom; they are expected to participate in ways ranging from creating a classroom constitution to establishing new job responsibilities" (Freiberg and Driscoll 2005). The bottom line is that up to a certain point, it is less costly to expel problem students than to provide the services needed to retain them. So, large schools with disproportionate numbers of low-income, students of color save money and maintain order at the cost of the students' futures (Meier, Stewart and England 1989).

The ambivalence toward the "socially undesirable but economically useful population" is fitting as a starting point for explaining why certain populations have been constructed as a threat, and in need of increasingly stringent levels of control. For African Americans and Latinos, this has meant over-representation in prison and phases of repression that include slavery and Jim Crow segregation in the case of African Americans and mass deportation and anti-immigrant policies in the case of Latinos (Dunbar and Villaruel 2002). It cannot be denied that the use of detention and incarceration have been part and parcel of dominating communities deemed undesirable, including African American, Latino, and other communities of color (Spring 2004; Takaki 1993; Zinn 1995). There has always been the understanding that public schools

would play an important role in contending with various social problems including the handling of "undesirable" populations. Since education is also touted as the liberator and equalizer for oppressed communities, it is a necessary and valued institution for those who seek upward mobility and opportunity. At the same time, the very same educational system is used as a tool for their assimilation and social control (Spring 2004). The good news is that students, their families, and even their teachers are not simply sitting back and accepting their positions of repression. Schools are also sites of resistance, subversion, and reform. Some students and teachers are seeking to change the conditions of schools to make them better and more in line with the support the students need.

The negative labelling and rejection of students associated with the enforcement of zero- tolerance policies has resulted in transforming the school setting into a prison-like setting. In addition, there has also been an increased presence of police to accompany the enforcement of zero tolerance towards misbehaviour. Research suggests that zero-tolerance of disobedient students seem to have further alienated those students as opposed to fostering compliance. Possibly the worst outcome is that students *without* behavioural problems are alienated by these policies as well. Moreover, there is little account taken for the circumstances that lead to the infractions. When taken into consideration the students interviewed for this project report that the discretion with which the school police enact the zero-tolerance policies is based on personal preference and rapport with students and the same is true of the administrators. Although zero-tolerance is supposed to be uniformly enforced among all students, students report that there is tolerance for some students' misbehaviour and intolerance for others.

As discussed more fully in the next chapter, these policies create and promote a climate of fear.

**School Police and Surveillance**

Despite the decrease in violent incidents in schools over the last three decades and the fact that schools remain among some of the safest public spaces, the number of school police and the use of surveillance on students has increased. Since zero tolerance left teachers with little or no discretionary power over discipline, school police were introduced to handle matters of discipline.

By the 1980s, there was a marked crisis in schools with respect to violence or at least that was the common understanding by parents and community members. The increased media attention to high school students was keenly focused on the fights and other forms of violence that were publicized. Those concerned about improving school safety focused particularly on reducing crime and drug use. Because the media highlighted incidents where teachers and administrators reshaped the school through their own agency, parents and community members began to consider it their *responsibility* to do so. It was commonly believed that "getting tough" on crime and violence would be sufficient to reduce these problems. Media coverage of violent conflicts at school generally supported the zero-tolerance agenda. What followed was the increased use by public schools of security measures such as metal detectors and police officers on campus. By the time these procedures and policies were implemented however, the violence within schools had already begun to quell. By the 1990s crime, drug and alcohol

use in and around schools had dropped by approximately 50% (Price 2009).

Unfortunately, the media reporting of crime at school did not reflect this decrease.

All of this triggered the adoption of a number of "solutions" to the problems of violence and drug-use in schools. Public school administrators commonly chose to increase police presence on campuses. In the 2003-2004 school year almost 54% of all public secondary schools in the United States had a daily police presence (National Center for Education 2010). In the same year, 70% of students ranging in age 12-18 years old reported at least some police presence at school.

Students interviewed for this dissertation confirm these trends. They all reported interaction with school police on a daily basis. Mostly, they interacted with the police when entering the school in the process of being scanned by a metal detector, having their bags checked, or as a result of getting into trouble during class. As indicated by Price (2009), there are three factors that increase the likelihood of police in school: 1) large school size, 2) a high percentage of students receiving reduced price school lunches, and 3) location in an urban area. Consistent with this argument, the students interviewed all attended schools that fit these three criteria.

The consequences of zero-tolerance policies coupled with the increased police presence in schools is troubling at best. Indeed, the very presence of police in schools requires justification to the school district as well as the parents and the community. The outcome is inevitable; a marked criminalization of student behavior that would have previously been handled by school administrators. Infractions have become more than a mere school-based problem. As a result, troubled youth, especially students of color and

low-income students, have greater levels of contact with police, Perhaps more problematic is that students come into contact with police so often that this contact holds little or no bearing in their lives (Harvard Civil Rights Project & Advancement Project 2000). When students reach the highest level of punishment or disciplinary action so quickly, it becomes normalized and fails to impact their behavior. Most disturbing is the fact that students criminally sanctioned in school are much more likely to be taken into the criminal justice system as a result of the school's actions. This is the school-to-prison pipeline (Price 2009). The school experience then becomes increasingly punitive and isolating for students. They navigate through it, trying to avoid being victimized both inside and outside of the school walls. As a function of their jobs on campus, school police at LAASD were reported to conduct pat downs and bag checks of students to check for drugs and weapons.

Increased police presence results in increased police involvement in students' lives. If it were the case that school police only got involved when students were behaving criminally, there would be less cause for concern about their impact. It is the case, however, that police often respond to student non-criminal behavior. The ultimate outcome of this type of student-police interaction is "a spike of school referrals to the juvenile court system for largely childish misbehavior" (Cobb 2009).

My informants agreed that when they were referred to the police for misconduct, it was not for "criminal" acts. Most often, they got in trouble for "mouthing off" or refusing to cooperate with their teacher or school police (and in one instance, a school administrator). Students indicated that school police were often guilty of responding to

students as if they were dangerous criminals. For example, Derrick described an incident where he was asked to lay on the floor and then asked if he had any weapons. "You see right there that the guy was on a trip cause we get checked for that on the way in!" From the students' perspective the lack of familiarity with the school environment among school police resulted in a limited focus on keeping school safe and increased focus on searching for, and identifying, "bad kids."

This sort of approach encourages students to adopt an "us against them" relationship with school police. This dynamic includes a lack of willingness by students to report infractions, and more disturbingly, a push to plan activities that the school would identify as infractions at off-campus locations. In a very real way this equates to a criminalization and prisonization of the school yard which contributes to more problems than it solves.

School police may provide a level of protection for students and staff in schools, but their presence has also resulted in greater numbers of student-police interactions. More importantly, it has led to more student arrests for non-criminal behaviour. Schools no longer have systems of their own to deal with student behavioural problems. Legally, a teacher in a school may exercise "powers of control, restraint, and correction as may be reasonably necessary to enable [him or her to] properly perform duties" (Cobb 2009). Even the briefest removal from class can have great consequences for students. For this reason, courts required that schools provide an oral and written notice of the charges and explanations of the evidence. A hearing for students who were removed from school is more than just a trivial matter because students maintain their constitutional rights despite

their presence in school. However, these rights have yet to be extended to cover other zero-tolerance practices such as referrals to the juvenile court. As a result, officials have the discretion to refer students without any due process rights that ensures that the infraction warrants such a referral. It should be noted that these referrals result in a drawn out process where the student sometimes misses a number of days of school. This harm is caused, not by the possible outcome of the court procedure, but by the referral itself and the subsequent missing of school days even when the student is found to be innocent. Regardless of the hearing's outcome, the loss of education, physical freedom, and the increased exposure to the adult criminal justice system warrants concern.

**Surveillance and Exclusionary Practices**

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), approximately 1,000 expulsions were completed during the 2002-2003 school year alone (NCES 2003). Exclusionary practices, or those that remove students from school as a form of discipline, help to normalize the expectation of incarceration (Meiners 2007).

Foucault (1977) explained how institutions influence and achieve social control through the use of the panopticon. Within prisons, the central tower of the panopticon, as described by Jeremy Bentham, allowed for continuous surveillance without the prisoners knowing whether or not their movements were being watched at any given time. This arrangement is intended to promote the policing of oneself among prisoners. Foucault argues that the combination of surveillance and regulation, rather than punishment alone, has become an increasingly common technique of social control within prisons as well as many other institutions, including schools. To Foucault, this movement toward

surveillance meant that the ruling elite class would profit monetarily and politically through the criminalization of certain groups.

For those who are responsible for school safety, they benefit in their positions and maintain their power over decision making in school by imposing these tough on "crime" policies. Their actions provide the appearance that they are on top of school discipline and that they are worthy of the positions they hold because of their swift and harsh action. At first glance, their goal of self-regulation is a desirable one because it falls in line with what adults feel is a positive outcome for students; self-regulating, responsible youth who follow rules. While, in theory, Foucault's argument is compelling and relevant to the imposition of these techniques on high school students, in practice the usefulness of these techniques and the potential for self-regulation among the students is lost. Students provided little evidence in their interviews that indicated their increased use of self-regulation as a result of the increased surveillance they experienced at school. Instead they expressed feelings of being unjustly treated as "offenders" when only a few students actually misbehaved.

**Probation and Arrests**

Along with the spread of zero-tolerance policies within schools and the corresponding increased police presence, there is also an increased use of policies that resemble practices of the criminal justice system and that are even described with the same language. In instances where students are not removed from school for infractions, there is still the use of what is called *probation.* The infractions that foster these responses are those that are behavioural rather than criminal. Nevertheless, the use of this

practice (probation) implies not only that a crime has been committed, but also that the student has been found guilty of committing this crime and now serves a probation following some sort of punishment. In their descriptions of probation, students explain that it is similar to probation that is served by released prisoners. They described checking in with the school police officer and receiving harsher punishments should they be discovered to partake in a second incident for which they are currently serving. One respondent reported a teacher "threatening" him because she knew he was still on probation for a minor behavioural infraction. He recalled being fearful that he could end up being expelled for such a minor offence.

**Walls and Fences**

When asked about the overall condition of the school, one student responded, "Our school was really nice; no one from around [the neighborhood] can get to the school because of the big fence. It keeps the bad people out 'cause it's really tall and there are lights at the top at night." As she goes on to explain how nice her school is, what is compelling is the way she has normalized the prison-like conditions within it. In fact, she and a number of other students tended to understand the tall fences and walls as keeping them safe inside. They did not express the feeling that they were actually the ones being controlled. Interestingly, their descriptions of the walls and fences that characterized their schools were rich with detail about the measures that were used to maintain security and with images evocative of highly controlled prisons. They described razor wire atop tall fences and some described actual bars. As one student described, "the field is surrounded by bars that are tall…12 feet." The student further described how the old fence had been

replaced by this sturdier barred fence. Approximately half of the students interviewed described ominous fencing and walls surrounding the school grounds. All but two students interviewed described fencing gates or walls at the entrance of their schools.

Not every student felt as though they were being kept safe by these tall, prison-like fences though. One student referred to the fence surrounding his school as "the wall." He went on to say, "You know 'the wall' like in jail they have to get over the wall to break out?" He went on to say that it "…makes me feel like I want to escape." Still, he was the only student who verbalized this sentiment. Other respondents developed a sense that takes these practices and built environments for granted as necessary or good. Still others seem to have simply accepted the conditions without critically examining their use and usefulness. The consequence is an unintended maintenance of the status quo. Schools administrators tout the benefits of these practices and reap the rewards that come from the approval of community members, school assembly members and parents without input from the students who are directly affected by them.

**Conclusion**

Zero-tolerance has had a significant impact on how students experience school. For students, the use of zero-tolerance to hand down punishments has contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline that creates a prison-like setting at school. The problem being that zero-tolerance is a seemingly simple solution to what is really a very complex issue.

Students from this Southern California school district have been subjected to zero-tolerance policies as a result of incidents of violence that have occurred at their respective schools. Their attitudes vary with respect to the implementation of these

policies with some of them feeling powerless to make a change or to resist change and others feeling as though the policies have affected them in ways that do not improve their overall safety or satisfaction with the school. The zero tolerance policies that students have experienced include the addition of school police and surveillance of their movements. These additions have resulted in the increased prisonization of the school overall. Students report that the prisonization ranges from language used to the actual practices. For example the use of the term "probation" as punishment for students who misbehaved coupled with the requirement that students on probation check in with a police officer for a certain period of time closely resembles the treatment of criminals in our society.

The prisonization of the schools also includes the increased surveillance of students as they move through their day at school. Practices include the use of pat-downs, bag inspections and the increased use of school police on campus. For students the theoretical impact of a panopticon-type setting is lost with most students reporting little or no increased self-regulation as a result of this increased surveillance. Instead, they report a heightened feeling of intimidation and a greater likelihood of reporting incidents that might lead to even greater surveillance.

Along with increased surveillance is the increased use of exclusionary practices at school. This includes the use of expulsion and detention as a means of discipline. This is relevant in that it contributes to the overall feeling of the school as a prison rather than a location of learning and cultural transmission of values. It also removes the student from the school and puts them into contact with the actual criminal justice system. These

practices contribute to the school losing its foothold as a location for molding and directing students in a positive way. As a part of zero-tolerance, these practices remove the discretion that teachers have over assessing situations and using the personal bonds they have with students and their powers of persuasion to resolve potentially volatile situations.

As mentioned above, probation and arrest are part of the zero-tolerance atmosphere at school and while scared parents and community members often lend their support to these practices, students reported that they were not useful in improving the atmosphere at school and even counterproductive in terms of poisoning their attitudes towards school. On the other hand, the use of walls and fences on campus were taken for granted by students. They reported the construction of the walls and fences in a more matter-of-fact manner than in a critical way. Their perceptions ranged from comfort to dissatisfaction with these structures and only a very few made the connection of the construction of these fences with the prison-like atmosphere at school.

The relevance of the school as a prison-like setting is important in that this LAASD is responsible for educating primarily students of color. Just as it is for all students, their experience at school is as vital in preparing them for what comes after graduation. In the case of the schools examined in the project, the students are being prepared to thrive in a prison-like setting. From language, to practices to the physical environment, students become familiar with the workings of prison rather than with an educational system that fosters critical thinking and problem-solving. For those observing schools from outside of them, the reasons for these practices are sensible. They look at

the students, they see some bad behavior, they agree with the use of these policies and the consequences. Their overall thought is "you do the crime, you do the time." Yet, the idea that these are young people in a school and not prisoners in a jail or prison is lost. When the image includes students of color, the crime then becomes associated with the race or ethnicity, rather than the behavior. Simply stated, the stereotypes that are used to characterize criminals in general (young, poor, male of color) are upheld and transferred to these students. These ideas of racialized student violence are examined more closely in the following chapter. The imposition of practices such as zero-tolerance on students of color reinforces racial stereotypes of black and brown youth as criminal. School administrators' reactions to conflicts among students have a negative impact not only on the students who take part in violent behavior but also on the whole student population of a school that experiences such incidents when they do not seek students' input as to the origins of the violence and their suggestions on how to address those origins.

**Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This project sought to address learn what students perceive to be the causes of racial conflict in their schools and what the role of the school was in the creation of racial conflicts in schools. The completion of this project has resulted in an initial look into how students see conflicts beginning and how the use of racial language in the carrying out of these conflicts can be better understood. This largely missing student perspective reveals that the use of racial slurs by both the participants in the conflict and the bystanders who watch the conflict does not always reflect the racist attitudes that school administrators, community members and the media present them as. This information from students comes from their accounts of violent incidents and begins to fill the gap in research that addresses these issues.

**Summary of Findings**

In Chapter two, students offered information about the conflicts that challenge the common assumption that they are racially motivated. Although racist language was sometimes used by the students involved to insult one another, the students did not think that the conflicts mainly stemmed from racial hatred. Instead, students described a variety of interpersonal reasons for the conflicts they witnessed. Because students have a more intimate understanding of the relationships among students, they offer great insight as to how these outbursts are best handled. Including a student-based evaluation for the conflict then seems imperative in the schools' response to conflicts among students. Administrators' failure to do this may help to explain why students perceived schools' responses to violence among students, namely preaching racial tolerance or imposing

new restrictive rules on the general student population, to be largely ineffectual in quelling further incidents.

Chapter three offers findings about the true nature of triggers that spawn violence among students. Interpersonal conflicts were identified as the root cause for most of the incidents described in interviews. Even in the case of incidents that involved students from different racial groups, interpersonal conflicts were identified as a more important factor than racial animosity. Most of the conflicts, both interracial and intraracial and those involving females as well as males, focused on romantic partners. Interestingly, females were more likely than males to start a fight over a romantic partner of interest as opposed to other types of conflicts like an angry look, or scuffles over space. While boys did experience conflict over romantic partners, they also were reported to fight over things like angry looks, personal items being moved or touched, and old arguments from a former friendship or acquaintanceship they shared.

Goading also played an important role in the escalation of conflicts into fights. Goading was reported to be crucially important as verbal arguments developed into physical fights. Ranging from exclamations over what people in conflict are saying to one another to actual words like "hit him" to joining in the physical fight, goading represents a way that disrespect is doled out and exchanged in student conflicts. Goading was also significant in that students expressed disrespect not only of the individuals involved in the conflict but also their "crews" (if they belonged to one). Because the crew represents a source of status for those who belong to them, disrespect expressed towards the crew is perceived as a personal insult and heightened or inflamed an argument.

Goading is interesting in that it represents the avenue along which race enters into the conflict. Frequently goading employed racial slurs. But it should also be clear that insults also focused on the individuals' failure to fulfil certain standards of female beauty, individuals' perceived lower class status, or other personal or social characteristics that were deemed "appropriate" or relevant by the students in conflict. This is the specific behavior that school staff and administrators focused on and resulted in their perceiving the conflict as racialized. But while they focused on the use of racial slurs, the use of other types of slurs were disregarded. This focus distracts school administrators and staff from the actual triggers of the conflicts. This racialization then directs the response that is used to address the conflict thereby missing the mark. Students' accounts thus challenge the portrayal of conflicts involving black and Latino students as racially motivated by the mainstream media, school officials, and parents and community members. Disrespect towards students, their loved ones, or their crew is possibly the most outstanding trigger that has been largely overlooked in responses to violence by school officials. Disrespect and the attempt to maintain ones' self-respect are the basis for all the conflicts described in the interviews I collected. In the case where a romantic partner is being defended, disrespect is present in that challenge. When a crew is disrespected, fights escalate to physical violence in an effort to preserve respect towards the group. Goading is a type of disrespect that is doled out during a verbal disagreement between individuals that encourages them to escalate a verbal conflict into a physical fight. Without directly addressing and promoting respect (as opposed to tolerance alone), students will continue to fight to maintain their respect. Disrespect is also an important component of the

schools' response to violence on campus. In cases where students express dissatisfaction with the way that the school responded to violence, they indicate that they feel disrespected because they are being punished for others' misbehavior.

As chapter four revealed, schools tended to employ one or more of three general types. Efforts by the school and its administrators to encourage racial tolerance were the first type of response reported. Students reported that this was a largely misguided response due to their extensive interaction and close residence to groups of color other than their own. Their daily lives required that they had little or no need to tolerate people that they were friends with and lived near already. Although the overarching pillars of racism appeared in the slurs they used to insult one another, racism did not play the role that was implied by the bulk of responses imposed by the school. Importantly, they also indicated that a racially based response by the school was off track because most of the incidents they witnessed were not racially motivated.  In fact some explained that the use of a racially based response actually contributed to an atmosphere of racial strife. Still others described a situation where discussions did not go far enough in guiding students through discussion about race which left them to their own devices in trying to make sense of things like race and racial conflict. Most noticeably missing was a discussion format, and no information about inequality or the origins of racism.

Increased surveillance, restriction and denial of access to school facilities was the second general type of response to violence at school. Increased surveillance was reported in forms ranging from video cameras being installed to hiring of more school police and security to the restriction of students' movement about campus. The most

severe example of this was to disallow students partially of completely from using all of the schools' bathroom facilities. By and large the girls whose bathroom use was restricted and others on the same campus who were not affected (male students) were most vocal about their feelings that the school administrators had unfairly punished them for others' misdeeds. In another example cited by students, school administrators restricted students from moving freely about campus and forced them to interact with others they did not like or get along with. These restrictions also cut off some students with the networks that they were closest with, which seemed unfair to them.

Punishing only the individuals directly involved in the conflict was the third type of institutional response to student conflict reported. This meant that the school offered no public or general response to the incident, such as holding a special assembly to discuss it or changing the rules for the general student body. Students expressed the highest levels of contentment with this way of handling the incident.

Zero tolerance has thus proven to be a significant factor in school administrators' response to violent conflicts among students. Students from this Southern California school district have been subjected to zero-tolerance policies in most cases whether they were personally involved in the incident or not. While students hold varying attitudes about zero-tolerance policies and practices, there are some trends in the ways that students regard the implementation of such rules. Some of them feel powerless to make a change or to resist change while others indicate that the policies have affected them in ways that do not improve their overall safety or satisfaction with the school. Some of the policies that students described include the addition of school police and surveillance of

their movements. They describe the use of prison-like language (i.e. probation and parole, etc) to describe the policies towards students that misbehave, and they also describe everyday interactions with school police.

Prisonization of the schools, explored more fully in chapter 4, is also evident with the increased surveillance of students' bodies and belongings as they navigate physically through the school. The use of pat-downs, bag inspections and the increase of school police on campus all represent a prisonization of the school grounds through the treatment of students, in essence, as prisoners rather than students. While the use of these tactics may appear on their face to increase safety, the use of them on students, particularly students who have not participated in the behavior that warrants this reaction, the impact of the "get tough" "zero-tolerance" approach is lost. In fact, students reported little or no increased self-regulation as a result of this increased surveillance. The ultimate outcome was for students to feel intimidated and less inclined to report violent incidents and the conflicts that lead up to them to teachers or school administrators because of the potential for even greater levels of surveillance being imposed on the general student body.

Additionally the use of exclusionary practices at school was reported to have an impact on students' experience at school. Exclusionary practices include the use of expulsion and detention as a means of discipline. Along with the use of zero-tolerance policies, increased surveillance and the use of these exclusionary practices contribute to the overall prisonization of the school. The outcome is that the schools' potential for being a place of learning and cultural transmission of democratic values is undermined.

Moreover, it physically removes students from the school and puts them into contact with the actual criminal justice system. Furthermore, it removes the discretionary power that teachers once had to take incidents on a case by case basis and places it in the hands of someone who has little knowledge of the interpersonal relationships that exist between students. The school also loses its ability to mold and direct students in a positive way and on a personal basis.

As parents and community members involve themselves in the schools' response to violent incidents, the use of practices like probation, parole, and even arrests and citations are encouraged. While students reported that they were not useful in reducing conflict among students, parents and community members tend to be comforted by the schools' use of these practices. Part of the physical aspects of zero-tolerance includes the use of walls and fences on campus, which students reported in a very matter-of-fact way. Some students' perceptions were that they were more comfortable as a result of the wall or fence while others expressed discontent with the prison-like structures. Most of the students seemed to take the construction of these prison-like walls and fences for granted. Only a very few made the connection between the construction of these fences with the prison-like atmosphere at school.

Because students are being prepared to face what comes after high school, the experience they have at school is imperative.  The schools examined here reveal that students are in many important ways, being prepared to face prison, or at least a prison-like environment. This does not bode well for the student populations served in these schools, largely students of color, or the surrounding neighborhoods in which they reside.

The use of language, the practices of zero-tolerance, and the alteration of the physical

environment, all help to familiarize themselves with and become comfortable in a prison

rather than with an educational system that fosters critical thinking and problem-solving

or even a working environment that requires creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

For the outsider looking in, the reasonable attitude is that misbehavior warrants

this type of response. This too contributes to the overall prisonization of school. School

administrators' attitudes reflect the public's attitudes about real prisoners and the way

that people are happiest to let others deal with these issues. Their agreement with the use

of these policies and the consequences follow a line of thinking that fosters maintenance

of the status quo rather than challenging it. The fact that these are young people in a

school and not prisoners in a jail or prison is lost. This is negatively impactful for even

the most entitled and privileged students but when students of color are involved the

"crime" becomes associated with the race or ethnicity, rather than the behavior.

As my findings in chapter 3 and 4 showed, students' attitudes about the schools'

imposition of new rules and policies in response to violent incidents were consistent

across respondents. All students indicated that they simply accepted the changes that

were required of them without resistance. The overall sentiment was they could do

nothing about preventing the institutional changes despite their unhappiness with them.

**Implications**

The implications for school policy are clear. There is a very real aspect missing

from schools' responses to violent incidents at on campus. For responses to be

meaningful and impactful, a student perspective must be incorporated into policies and

procedures that are imposed. Without their input, responses are misguided and have little impact on students' understandings of how to contend with conflicts they experience with others. By ignoring what students have to say about violence at their schools, school officials are simply assuming that they have a grasp on what needs to be done. School officials also wrongly assume that conflicts between black and Latino students are primarily generated by racial animosity, when my findings show instead that such conflicts are frequently interpersonal in nature and that goaders play a key role in escalating student conflicts from verbal arguments to violent assaults. The schools' zero-tolerance policies and the imposition in some cases of broad sweeping punishments in response to student conflicts has contributed to students' alienation and created a sort of us (students) against them (administrators and staff) that inhibits students' willingness to come forward with information about why conflicts initiate. Because students have clearly indicated that disrespect and the maintenance of respect for oneself, a romantic other, or a crew are the main motivations underlying most of the conflicts among students it is crucial that schools address it in their responses to violent incidents.

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**Appendix 1: Student Interview Schedule**

1. What high school did you attend?

2. What would you say the racial make-up of the student population was?

3. How do you think the different racial groups got along at your school? Were there ever fights between students of different racial groups?

   a. Probe: How did the different *minority groups* get along at your school?

   b. Probe: Were there ever fights between blacks and Latinos?

4. How would you say teachers and other faculty viewed the different racial groups at school?

   a. Probe: Do they treat all groups the same or do you think they tend to favor certain racial groups over others? [If they say there is unequal treatment, ask them to provide specific examples of this].

5. What would you say is the race of the people you hang out with in school?

   a. Why do you think those are the kids you hang out with as opposed to _____?

6. Were physical fights among students common at your school?

7. Did you ever witness fights (or conflicts) at school between blacks and Latinos?

   a. Probe: Describe the incident.

   b. Probe: Were verbal insults exchanged? Can you remember what was said?

   c. Probe: Was it physically violent?

   d. Probe: What would you say is the reason why this fight occurred? What makes you believe that is the reason?

8. Were there any other fights that happened at your school between blacks and Latinos? [Probe with questions 7 a-c for each incident the interviewee recalls]

9. Do you think that African-Americans and Latinos at your school were more inclined to clash with each other than they were with other groups or among themselves?

   a. Probe: What makes you feel that way?

   b. Probe: Do you think conflicts between black and Latino students were more frequent or more serious than inter-racial conflicts among other groups? What makes you feel that way?

c. Probe: Was there more violence within ethnic/racial groups or between them?

10. What was the reaction of the faculty to the violence that occurred in fights between students?

    a. Probe: Did they hold assemblies to discuss it, discuss the issue in class, or punish the students?

    b. Probe: Do you think that was a helpful thing to do? Why or why not?

    c. Probe: Did faculty respond similarly or differently to fights when they involved blacks and Latinos as they did to fights involving students of other racial groups?

    d. Probe: Did they punish certain racial groups for fighting more than others? What makes you feel that way? [Ask for a specific example].

    e. Probe: Did they impose more restrictions or rules? [Ask for a specific example].

11. How would you describe your school's facilities (i.e. bathrooms, classrooms, books, campus overall)?

    a. Probe: Do students have enough space and resources at your school?

    b. Probe: Has the lack of space or resources (e.g., long lines at bathrooms or during lunch or overcrowded locker areas) ever been a source of conflict among students?

12. How would you describe your community's opportunities for jobs? Education?

    a. Probe: What does your community teach you about other ethnic/ racial groups?

**Appendix 2: Community Leader Interview Schedule**

1. Do you live and/or work in the vicinity of Jefferson high school and for how long? In what capacity do you interact with youth from this high school?

2. How do you think the different racial groups get along at school? Were there ever fights between students of different racial groups?

    a. Probe: How did the different *minority groups* get along at school?

    b. Probe: Were there ever fights between blacks and Latinos?

3. How would you say your neighbors view the different racial groups at school?

    a. Probe: Do they treat all groups the same or do you think they tend to favor certain racial groups over others? [If they say there is unequal treatment, ask them to provide specific examples of this].

4. How do cliques form at school? Race? Class? Something else?

    a. Probe: Why do you think those are the cliques that form as opposed to _____?

    b. Probe: How they become those cliques?

5. Were physical fights among students common at the local high shcool?

6. Did you ever witness or hear about fights (or conflicts) at school between blacks and Latinos?

    a. Probe: Describe the incident.

    b. Probe: Were verbal insults exchanged? Can you remember what was said?

    c. Probe: Was it physically violent?

    d. Probe: What would you say is the reason why this fight occurred? What makes you believe that is the reason?

7. Were there any other fights that happened at school between blacks and Latinos? [Probe with questions 7 a-c for each incident the interviewee recalls]

8. Do you think that African-Americans and Latinos at school are more inclined to clash with each other than they were with other groups or among themselves?

    a. Probe: What makes you feel that way?

b. Probe: Do you think conflicts between black and Latino students were more frequent or more serious than inter-racial conflicts among other groups? What makes you feel that way?

c. Probe: Was there more violence within ethnic/racial groups or between them?

9. What was the reaction of the faculty to the violence that occurred in fights between students?

a. Probe: Did they hold assemblies to discuss it, discuss the issue in class, or punish the students?

b. Probe: Do you think that was a helpful thing to do? Why or why not?

c. Probe: Did faculty respond similarly or differently to fights when they involved blacks and Latinos as they did to fights involving students of other racial groups?

d. Probe: Did they punish certain racial groups for fighting more than others? What makes you feel that way? [Ask for a specific example].

e. Probe: Did they impose more restrictions or rules? [Ask for a specific example].

10. What was the reaction of the community to the violence that occurred in fights between students?

a. Probe: Did they hold community meetings to discuss it, discuss the issue in class, or punish the students?

b. Probe: Who participated in these meetings? Neighbors? Police? Parents? Teachers? Administrators?

c. Probe: Do you think that was a helpful thing to do? Why or why not?

d. Probe: Did the community respond similarly or differently to fights when they involved blacks and Latinos as they did to fights involving students of other racial groups?

e. Probe: Did they punish certain racial groups for fighting more than others? What makes you feel that way? [Ask for a specific example].

f.  Probe: Did they impose more restrictions or rules? [Ask for a specific example].

11. How would you describe this community's opportunities for jobs? Education?

   a.  Probe: What does your community teach you about other ethnic/ racial groups?

   b.  Probe: Do you witness racial tension or conflict in your neighborhood?

## APPENDIX 3: Description of Interviewees

The names listed below are pseudonyms for interviews conducted by Michelle Ysais:

## <u>College bound males</u>
*African American*

Andre

Aaron

Baron

Cal

Derek

*Latino*

Ben

James

Jesse

Rene

Robert

## <u>College bound females</u>
*African American*

Charity

Chandra

Janine

LaShawn

Reina

*Latina*

Adela

Betty

Chris

Diana

Jessica

## Non college bound males
*African American*

Anthony

Dre

Eric

Ray

Terrence

*Latino*

Jose

Miguel

Rod

Tomas

Val

## Non college bound females
*African American*

Andrea

Dana

Elle

Lucille

Rhonda

*Latina*

Espy
Isabel

Julia

Linda

Noemi

## <u>**Community Members**</u>

Ming- shop owner

Rosa- shop owner

Aida- local resident

Olga- local resident

Robert- community center employee

Joanna- community center employee

Gustavo- local resident

Maggie- shop worker

Orlando- shop worker