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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Getting Schooled: Intra-Ethnic Differentiation, School Acts
in Making Differences.

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

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Anthropology

by

Daniel Diaz Reyes

December 2010

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez, Chairperson
Dr. Tom Patterson
Dr. Juliet McMullin

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Daniel Diaz Reyes
December 2010

The Dissertation of Daniel Diaz Reyes is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No one completes projects of this magnitude alone. In filing of this dissertation, I must acknowledge the many people that were instrumental in supporting, mentoring and ultimately “feeding” me throughout this endeavor. There is no priority implied here, just a spark of sincere recall of gratitude to the many people that were so very important in the completion of this doctorate. I apologize if I omit any names, but know that I am whole heartedly appreciative of the multiple paths and forms participation.

I begin with the 2001 UCR Anthropology cohort. We began core theory as strangers and ended as friends-that deserves “cake.” To Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez, Tom Patterson, Juliet McMullin and Michael Kearney I can only say thank you. Your support as mentors and friends outlined my work professionally and personally in ways that I cannot begin to express. Very special thanks to Raza Grad Students Association (RGSA). The Friday meetings at “the barn” saved me. That was a good moment for us (Lauren, Erica, Esther, Jose, Mike, Juan, Homero, Alex, Shigeru, Nick, Julian). To the Ethnic Studies Department, I thank for “adopting” me. Alfredo Mirande, Dr Richard Lowy, Robert Perez, Anthony Macias, Jana Brown, Dylan Rodriguez and staff became family. Chicano Students Programs (CSP) and Native American (NASA) students programs were home. The students in these centers provided beautiful energy. Estella Acuña and Josh Gonzalez, thank you. KUCR, thank you for your creative space and opportunities. “Radio Aztlan” served as place to speak and write. Much of the dissertation was written in production room “A” while DJs ran shows into the night. Thanks crew (Louis V., Eddie V., Eli the alibi, Fongus, Snoopy, Guapo Lapo, Trip, Mr.

Blue and Surge). To Eveleen thank you for your editorial review and many words of encouragement. I owe you a “dirty martini.”

I must also thank my first circle of mentors, Ines Hernandez-Avila, Adaljisa Sosa-Riddell, and Malaquias Montoya; I carry your work with me always. I thank the students and teachers that opened their lives so that I may document their “schooling.” I hope I was able to justly present your experiences.

Last but not least, thank you to my family. Malinalli Milian Diaz Casas –*Mija*– thank you for sharing your beauty and time–“*A donde vas Papa? Voy a lo escuela mija, regreso pronto.*” To Yvette Milian Casas, this project has a long history. You were there at its inception. Thank you for your belief, support and helping keep the conversation alive as well as giving birth to new conversations. Nancy and Diana–*mis hermanitas*–thank you for your support. Your unrelenting vision of our potential was my map. Our talks are imbedded in this work. I thank all the Diaz and Reyes family, we are many and there is much work ahead. Gracias a mi papi Nicandro Diaz y mami Maria Vitelia Diaz Reyes. Su apoyo e instrucción inicial, hizo este trabo. Ustedes son mis primeros maestros.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Getting Schooled: Intra-Ethnic Differentiation, School Acts
in Making Differences.

by

Daniel Diaz Reyes

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, December 2010
Dr. Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez, Chairperson

“We all go to school...nobody wants to be here, but that’s the way it is! Everyone’s got to get schooled.” Countless hours committed to classroom, playground and homework naturalize an otherwise arbitrary arrangement best understood as “getting schooled.” School participants fundamentally understand this education process is about acquiring explicit systematic instruction.

This dissertation presents the school experience as a place of multiple meanings where *Intra-ethnic differentiation* examines the process of identity categories among adolescents within a Chicano-Latino community set in a South Central middle school of Los Angeles, California. This study documents the multiple categories as intra-ethnic differentiation among Chicano Latino school youth, defined as an experience of community fragmentation where members express distinct in-group differences that contrast an external appearance of homogeneity and or solidarity; fragmented into

multiple dynamic identities set in internal relationships of rank. The intra-ethnic inventory include: “cholos”, “schoolies”, “players”, “*los americanizados*” (the Americanized), “*Chuntaros*”(rift raft, undesirable poor), “ the Mexican-Mexicans”, “county rushers”, “ punks” and “posers.” The expressed divisions are characteristic of fluid boundaries involved in dialectic between-group relationships creating, modifying and challenging power, prestige and resources. The following text demonstrates that each identity is accompanied by respective educational, social, economic, and institutional opportunities and boundaries. The different identities exist as consequence of strategies of adaptation to socio-economic, political and national pressures. In a scholastic context, ethnic membership becomes a commodity of change responsive to survival mechanisms; identity models develop as abstract processes that are both self and externally defined and accompanied with real world consequences. The students must contend with and navigate identity fields they did not create. The demands, expectations and socioeconomic arrangements of the larger non curricular society are reflected and “acted out” on the school grounds.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

This work is a study about the lives of Chicano Latino middle school kids. This project uncovers, analyzes and presents the experiences of children as they navigate the educational phase known as “Jr. High”. My intention is to offer this work as an in-depth ethnographic presentation of identity issues as lived experiences. This study focuses on Chicano Latino ethnic identity in a school context in Los Angeles California.¹ At the core of this project is a quest to explore and add to the discussion on the acts of differentiation; the explicit divisions as identity issues existent within this community. The intention is not to simply publicize internal issues, but to study them in order to open real community conversations in hopes to confront and resolve a problem of making differences.

This research stems from my experience as a Mexican immigrant raised in South Central Los Angeles; background that not only complements my work, but guides and assists in sorting out the many of the issues behind it. Having been a resident of Los Angeles for over three decades, I am intimately familiar with the structural and cultural topics of the area and community. I approach this project capitalizing on my experience as a Los Angeles resident-immigrant, LAUSD educated and educator. I do not pretend to “objectify” what I have observed but rather I am very cognizant of the experience and how it may shape but also inform this work.

¹ The term Chicana(o), Mexican, and Latino are used interchangeably throughout the text to reference an operational community. There is notable discussion of differential significance between each respective terms, but such discussion is omitted due to research scope and intent.

The title of this text “*Getting Schooled*,” comes from a phrase commonly referenced by the students themselves-“Ooh! Snaps! You got schooled!”² Early in my field work a ninth grade student astutely stated:

“Listen mister. It’s like this. These fools [new entrants] don’t know shit, they think they know shit. That’s why they act like that. Thinking they’re all that. Walking around here like they have something, like they know what’s up, but they don’t know shit and they got nothing. That’s why sometimes you have to roll up on them, hit’em up and school them. You know, put them in their place. After that [getting schooled], they good”

To get schooled implies more than acquisition of necessary instructions for proper participation in the school setting. Throughout the field work period I heard this phrase used during sports, over lunchtime conversations and moments of social competitions. In every instance of its use, to get schooled meant to be “put in your place” which signals to an obvious play in power dynamics. In order for one to get schooled there must exist one who does the schooling. The schooling of adolescents is undertaken by both official and unofficial participants. The scholastic institution composed of faculty, teachers and curriculum often carry the most instruction credibility, yet the adolescent peer group society is not only important but supplementary essential. Adolescent culture is responsible for a proprietary program of schooling. The playground culture takes on the task of reinforcing a system of divisions requiring a complex and rich process of enculturation. Through daily micro acts of differentiation, students appropriate behaviors

² 7th grade male uses this phrase in moment of “instruction” onto another peer group member while playing basketball. “*Getting schooled*” was constantly used in alternate scenarios yet consistently demonstrated textured meaning acquisition of knowledge sets.

and rules dictating explicit terms of human relationships. In three years time, students mature physically but also ideologically in order to culminate with permanent visions of a world of hierarchy expressed in human value worth associated to categories of differentiation. Given such a transformative task, the school becomes the site of production

The school process occurs in disconnection from a “parent” community. As a cohort, participants experience a divide and erasure from family and community resources; schooling is a subtractive process (Spring, 1997; Valenzuela 1999). “[They] have to do this on their own. Mommy and daddy can’t help [them] here. [They] must learn to do things on [their] own. You can’t bring them in”³ Pupils learn to exclude the richness of diversity of the surrounding neighborhood as ultimately they know they “can’t bring [it] in.” They must learn define themselves away from community and toward individuals.

Within the school walls, socio demographic solidarity is converted to heterogeneity. Adams exists within the segregated urban history of Los Angeles. Central Los Angeles was previously the most vibrant Black quarter of the city but is now Brown- more specifically Latino recent immigrant (Cox, 1996; Davis, 2001). Limited diversity does not threaten the objective of producing highly intricate peer divisions because the social categories are micro performances of macro templates. The labels change but the

³ In hallway a teacher (Ms. M) lectures 6th grade male student for using his family as justification for not completing the assignment “You have to do this on their own. Mommy and daddy can’t help you here. You must learn to do things on your own. You can’t bring them in”

divisions correspond to enduring economic and political structures expressed in a scholastic folk taxonomy of performed roles

As students work to fit in, they both achieve and are ascribed positions-managed through issues of *confianza* (trust)-within a complex web of formalized relationships operating in systems of stratification; national, political and economic roles are creatively manifested (Vélez-Ibañez 1983). Though class ethnicity and “race” variability is locally limited, students will invent their own diversity. Among the poor, rich kids will emerge; among an all Brown community, White kids will be called out in order to more closely mirror adult social divisions. Peer group cliques functionally structure a society requiring continuous processing and detailed inventories. Daily activities record student types in order to tailor group specific school experiences for all participants, a practice most highlighted among newcomers. Immigrant students attend one school with two programs. Outsiders are initiated into sophisticated processes of divisions referred here as *Intra ethnic differentiation*-issues of class and race-as part of American incorporation.

Ultimately the address of school culture as issues of identity leads our attention to the body as the intersection of ideology and practice. Social categories are expressions of power, control and resistance that become displayed in uniforms. In this research context, clothing not only identifies but is highly contested. The school attempts to counter playground divisions by uniforming the student body, figuratively and literally.

In blue and white, the students are intended to become singular “patriots;” demonstrating a disconnection between the institution’s understanding of diversity and that of the adolescent culture’s formulations of differentiation.

Identity

This project addresses identity by first acknowledging the term itself as a paradox in that its ubiquity in our daily speech signals clarity while ignoring much definitional support. If the question “what is your Identity?” elicits a straight forward response, do we need to define it? I suggest yes, supported in agreement that all “historical instances, normative development, a fragment of case history or event...is made clearer when something like identity development is assumed to exist” (Erickson; 25, 1968). Identity as a unit of analysis assumes a history, essence and parameters of operation assisted by building a vocabulary from which to discuss the social world. But it is important to note that identity holds a relatively recent appearance as topic of inquiry. This term must be understood as a historic artifact that enters and gains significance in the mid 20th century. It emerges as the social sciences of post World War II America actively dealt with the country’s search for a national identity, expressing a debate between essentialist views of the self and constructionist rubrics of society (Philip Gleason, 1983).

From one perspective, identity is the individual’s formulation of a consistent and visibly material world; “located in the core of the individual and yet in the core of

[his/her] communal culture.”⁴ Erick Erickson is most influential in propagating the two part definition of identity as existent in the life cycle of maturation and environmental formation. Identity was an ideological structure sprung from the phases of the ego, analogous to transitions of consciousness (Erickson, 1968). Erickson’s perspective in psychoanalysis makes identity into a cognitive template in which humans progressively define and make sense of the world through growth stages marked by conflict. Identity has early roots in the idea of a “self,” very much part of an objective core element. The environment becomes part of the conversation but ultimately is not definitional due to reliance on an understanding of human development, the psyche.

Conceptions of identity as rooted in deep mental structures prove applicably limiting here; the research emphasis of institutional education places primacy on identity displays within social environments. Introspective investigation of identity not only reduces social structural accountability but is potentially synchronic. Humans exist in built presents, expressing a history and constant change toward a future, ultimately manifesting “particular set of institutions and relations...[of] a peculiar configuration of meanings,...[shaping] the ongoing collective existence” (Hall 1976:11). Inclusion of cultural and social roles and attributes, not only politicizes identity but theoretically grounds it by directly engaging local practices as existent in an infrastructural world with concrete consequences, thus triggering a pedagogical shift. Identity is reframed in performed and *shared* activities of face-to-face interactions, meaningfully reflecting power, institutions, ideology and structure (Goffman 1967, Hall 1976).

⁴ Erikson, Erik H., Identity, youth, and crisis New York, W. W. Norton, 1968. Pg 22

Transitions away from notions of a singular “self” toward a collective experience, reframes identity as cultural expressions existent in social and national categories. The work of Durkheim, Marx and Weber referencing “collective conscience,” “class consciousness,” and “Verstehen (understanding)” respectively, serve as examples of group identity produced in shared experiences (Cerulo 1997; 386). The paradigmatic shift from the individual to group definitions introduces social anthropology’s context of conversations of gender, race, ethnic and class identity. The change to group definition retains essentialist strands by assuming inherent shared characteristics and traits to the group (i.e. culture). Just as qualities of sameness and continuity must exist within the self to support and unify an individual identity; at first there too is an implied existence of communal traits as shared function of an ethnic or class image. The final break from internal core properties is noticeable in the examination of questions of social structures as locals of influence and creation of identity.

Social and national models of identity move inclusion of culture, an essential human trait but one not itemized in the body. Identity as a social construct leads to new forms of study with varying political implications. If collective definitions are social artifacts, then we must question how they are created, changed and used in accordance with performances and assignments of power. The constructionist position permits identity to be examined as interactions which become continually renegotiated in social exchanges that serve to define the symbols and norms that initiate and sustain categories (Geertz 1976; Goffman 1967; Stryker 2000). This review highlights the subjective nature of identity constructs, not to reduce the credibility of categories such as gender, race,

ethnicity or class, but to redirect attention to examinations of the processes of building defined boundaries which materially shape behavior, expectations and opportunity as lived experiences. Identities are truly “multidimensional,” uneasily bound and “distributed” across categories but not reproduced cleanly within; yet inclusion of economic, political and social structures too often repackages identity discourse to a “holy trinity”-race/ethnicity, class and gender-as visible in much of education identity scholarship.⁵

School Identities

Education Literature addressing the complex mechanisms of identity category formation as a consistent appropriation of structural needs is extensive. The works of Stanton-Salazar (2001), Valenzuela (1999), Bourdieu (1977), Willis (1967) and others, associate school identity arrangements to economic socialization expressed in class and race/ethnic relationships. It is evident that an adequate understanding of schooling lies in the interrelated components of identity formation, formal education, institutions, and the nation-state. The effects of state structured knowledge systems become central as education is framed as a nation building process manifesting economic and socio-political needs. Foundational figures of state sponsored public education such as John Dewey and Thomas Jefferson advocated a model of schooling set forth to foster social equality and human virtues as building of a future American society-points used for later

⁵ Identity of categories of Race, Class and Gender are commonly referenced as the “holy trinity”. Ethnicity is usually matched with Race.

critical evaluations of the public school system as a state institutional tool (Dewey, 1915, Noll & Kelly, 1970).

The institutional structure of public education has long been the starting point for many critiques (Bowels & Ginitis, 1976). The history of limited access to racial, class and gender sectors of the U.S. population, and segregation, as well as acculturating approaches validate the argument of schools as settings for cultural practice in the reproduction of society's norms, values and inequalities; in other words "the school is a cultural institution where youth perform their future class roles."⁶ Children are funneled through school institutions by the thousands because they are obviously essential in society's reproduction. The question then is, how and what will be reproduced?

Reproduction theory recasts schools as exercising hierarchical and stratified economic arrangements of nations within requisites sustaining labor and social organizations (Bourdieu 1979, Willis 1977). Stating capitalism and nationalism as American traits built into the school system does not advance our understanding here. Instead we must move to assessments of intensity and degrees of reproduction by the performances and expressions in classrooms throughout America (Rippberger & Staudt, 2003).

Framing school as a crucial mechanism that trains thinking and doing for persons to join class structures is valid when complementary understood to be dynamic and textured. We must extend investigation past strict correlations to economic templates of

⁶ Foley, Douglas, *Learning Capitalist Culture* p. xv

workers and owners; instead schools demand a recast understanding as part of a larger “social universe of symbolic institutions that rather than impose docility and oppression, reproduce existing power relations *subtly* via production and distribution of a dominant culture that tacitly confirms what it means to [get schooled]” (Giroux, 2001; 87 emphasis added). As microcosms of a larger society, schools serve as points of intersections between ideology and practice. Students internalize a wealth of details of differentiation and exercise complex displays reifying status and power inequalities in order to make an otherwise arbitrary order into an objective reality (Bourdieu 1977). Compatibility between state ideology and academic order permits students to seemingly move from school positions to social status; thus fully legitimating the unequal arrangement via hidden patterns of credits and rewards.

The works of Paul Willis (1990) and Douglas Foley (1990) serve as foundational ethnographic examples of social reproduction, presenting the details of “working-class” structural operations as “expressive practices” in daily high school culture. The findings of Willis and Foley stress grounding economic theory through an intense documentation of cultural performances, in correspondence to academic success and segmented social arrangements. Foley uses “performance theory” to frame market compatible communication forms where students treat each other as identity categories as social rituals of initiation into an adult American capitalist culture.⁷ Though thoroughly detailed in their description of how “working class kids get working class jobs” and small town “Mexicano and Anglo” relations are legitimated in school, both works share hints of

⁷ Ibid, p. 192

structural determinism-unexpected, given both include resistance into the analytical conversation. Willis presents resistance as the English students' creation of cultural performances expressing manual labor and masculinity as an aware response to the structural inequalities imbedded in the school system. The "counter school culture" is very much a class-conscious movement. Students see through the educational program of differentiation and in their frustration, act out in visual retaliatory performances.

You do anything you can here to, you know, go against them. Well, I mean, you vandalize books. Yeah you smash up chairs, take screws out of... really afterward, you think, 'well, stuff me, our old lady paid for that lot out of tax', but at the time you're doing it you don't really care... you think you can get your own back on [them] you'll do anything you can (...) revenge, sort of thing, getting revenge.⁸

Unfortunately, insight of class dynamics is not liberating. Student responses of resistance feed into reaffirming and facilitating their eventual subjugation. Similarly, the "Vatos" and "Good Old Boy/Girls" of North Town challenge expectations in "making out games" yet ultimately find a place into their respective community strata (Foley 1990). In spite of how much adolescents "fight back," the system willingly appropriates all actions, in line to an original program of labor needs; the power differences are too disparate.

The review of cultural production in regenerating modes of inequality demonstrates a continual need of education studies toward domains of identity as the bridge between superstructure and infrastructure. Positioning analysis to a cultural level, addresses the riddle of structure versus individual agency and advances to a more thorough and complex understanding of the "ways in which people mediate and respond

⁸ Willis, Paul. *Learning to Labor: How working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* p 78

to the interface between their own [identities as] lived experiences and the structures of domination” (Giroux 2001; 108). Consequent works respond to culture as exercised and transformational, dynamic and interactional (dialectic), by elaborating not simply how reproduction occurs, but highlighting explicit avenues and moments of counter action (Eckert 1989; Friere 2007; McLoed 2004). New models of schooling (i.e. resistance theory) appropriate economically commodified identity constructs such as race/ethnicity, gender and class to connect macro analysis to micro playground displays. In-depth documentations of school culture reveal not simply reproduction but uniquely self authored cultural productions-even if reactionary-that conflict and contradict, if not minimally question reductive economy primacy (Stanton-Salazar 2003;, Valenzuela 1999; McLoed 2004, Eckert1989; Rippberger and Staudt 2003) The scholastic universe repositioned as more than economic, now factors political (state) expressions as places where “the mechanism which produce this [social arrangement] for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the school, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of [state] ideology; an ideology which represents the school as neutral environment purged of ideology” (Althusser, 1971; 157)

Nationality, Class, Race and Ethnicity

The work by Susan Rippberger and Kathleen Staudt (2003) along the el Paso-Juárez border, offer an excellent cross-cultural comparative examination of nationalism and school experiences as unique and distinct Mexico and Unites States versions of

nationalized education. The study demonstrates the respective nation-state's efforts to produce "American" and "Mexican" identities via the school system, paraphernalia and its agents-the teachers. Distinct national agendas are expressed in respective "performances" occurring within the school walls.

Though the cities of Juárez and El Paso have more in common with each other than their respective national capitals, each manifests different political and economic requirements. Through contrasts in classroom organization as well as teacher-student interactions, Rippberger and Staudt conclude that group collaboration and personal responsibility is exercised in Mexico while socialization of capitalism is ingrained into U.S. elementary school culture. They conclude that national priorities of individual versus community identity building are configured into schooling.

In *Manufacturing Hope and Despair*, Stanton-Salazar examines the relationship between school success and social networks of support. The theoretical template of Stanton-Salazar is framed on the observance of the structural effects of class, race, and gender articulated in terms of the objective ecological conditions evident in the lives of "low-status" U.S.-Mexican youth. Stanton-Salazar explores the role of teachers, staff and schools as more than academic figures. He credits their participation in building positive social relationship networks in "reproducing or interfering with the reproduction of...inequality."⁹

⁹ Stanton-Salazar, Ricardo, *Manufacturing Hope and Despair* p161

This study finds that *confianza* (trust) plays a vital role in adolescent school success. Students that are able to form non-curricular relationships with teachers and faculty convert the familiar exchanges into value forming advantages. A student in south San Diego reiterates:

She tries to get closer to us by telling us about her family. She is always willing to help us by telling us about her family. She is always willing to help you, not only in schoolwork, but in family problems, support, anything. She's like apparent. I trust her a lot.¹⁰

Unfortunately, schools as institutional settings are not designed to foster nor accommodate sincere relationships of trust, familiarity and support and instead recycle mechanisms desegregating success and failure. This study is significant not only in its micro address and trace of youth culture development and educational success to structural roots but more so because of the text basis of heterogeneous "Mexican American" ethnic identity as an investigatory focus. The emphasis in ethnic differences challenges essentialist models of collective identities by presenting school divisions as manifestations of larger social political and historic forces. Similarly, Angela Valenzuela's (1999) work pushes the examination of visible disparities of scholastic success between immigrant and US born Mexican youth by targeting the "politics of difference" (McCarthy1993). Her work demonstrates schooling as a subtractive process producing alternate education pathways dependent on ethnic differentiation in collaboration to "politics of caring," "*educacion*" and social capital as identified variables. *Subtractive Schooling* as a significant model, demands continual analytical

¹⁰ Ibid., 14486

pressure on education structures but also signals vacancies for further research most visible in the inquiry of identity formations-a task under taken here.

Review of the education literature strengthens discussions of reproduction of inequalities as critiques of public education where schools serve as centers of social replication, inequalities and all. The behavior of youth must be contextualized as built distinct identity traits interacting with one another (not always positive) working to reproduce more than state and economic needs of U.S. society. All societies operate under consistent adaptive rules; all cultures teach what is beneficial for the continued survival of their respective communities. Given that each generation experiences a new set of challenges, cultural teachings must continuously change. The continuous change leads to a conflicting equation of balancing transformation with stability. The community cannot change so much as to lead to a loss of definitional identity. Jules Henry in *Culture against Man* writes:

Inherent in the human condition is the fact that we must conserve culture while changing it; that is we must always be more sure of surviving than adapting... we think we wish to free the mind so it will soar, we are still, nonetheless, bound by the ancient paradox; for we must hold our culture together through clinging to old ideas lest, in adopting new ones we literally cease to exist [as distinct people].¹¹

With in a state society, balance to this equation is met through the institutionalization of learning, defined as the explicit appropriation of knowledge systems as well as transmission methods away from individuals to larger more powerful bureaucratic organizations in benefit of the state. It is the school system that is able to meet society's need for adaptability while at the same retaining cultural unity. Upcoming

¹¹ Henry, Jules, *Culture Against Man* p284-285

generations must be socialized to conform, obey and learn and accept their roles in society. But the scholastic culture is not binary, works that present rich versus poor; White versus Brown, US born versus non-U.S born must not lose sight of internal gradations, conflicts, and contradictions. This work addresses identity as managed through related cultural, economic and political landscapes as part of education research toward specificity, investigating exactly what happens in schools. The middle school experience is a “trippy” place of proprietary patterns and rules which are only revealed to and by those that live it.

Student: “it’s a trip here. [Our] parents drop us off but they don't know what goes on here. It’s just crazy!”
(8th, male, English only),

Teacher: “it’s a zoo... Just sit outside [playground quad] for a while and you'll see what I'm talking about. Sometimes when I'm bored I take my lunch outside and just sit and watch the show”
(ESL Teacher, female, Ms. M)

Intra-Ethnic Differentiation (School Social Identities)

The project that follows addresses identity as anti-ephemeral in its reliance of etic observations and a grounded study to provide a detailed examination documenting specific identity rubrics as relationships in materially defined contexts. Students reference labels that may appear arbitrary and superficial but reveal deep definitional meaning when situated in exercised opportunities of consequence. Unpacking school social identities reveal distinct exchange relationships expressing micro responses to structural pressures. I place attention on the sources producing and maintaining the displayed identities by examining the school site as prime regulator of identity as a distinction dependent eco-system. Identity is conceptually evaluated as possessing explicit definitional properties accompanied by distinct responsibilities and expectations; but more importantly, dependent on specific relationships within systemic arrangements, providing the operational rational. The relationships of exchange make this social world meaningful.

The act of schooling is dependent on national identity constructs in that it “*signifies* and *symbolizes* social conflicts and interests by reference to different types of human bodies” (Omi & Winant 2002; 123). The documented social categories are systemic relational expressions of institutional processes of identity making. Identity categories serve as roles instructing expectations and kinds of relationships plus exchange networks where group health is supplanted for U.S. versions of "individuality." It is clear that notions of the individual are ideals and not actual norms, in that the very notion of Americanism implies people hood as a collective. Significant here is addressing

American myths of individuality as requisite to class mobility. Inclusion through the strata as “moving up” is possible but only as part of distancing from markers of differentiation. It is clear that in-group membership limits incorporation but the contradiction lies in that no one can truly stand as an individual. The practice of stripping community ties is only to successfully transition and open membership on to another group.

The circulated school categories express multiple identity domains, but most accessible here is ethnic identification as stand in for what may be class or “race” elsewhere. The population’s 97% Chicana/o Latino composition and relatively young middle school position, assist in reduces identification of complex identity issues. The perceived homogenous context suppresses diversity and highlights ethnicity to become a central issue, a valuable commodity. Ethnic constructs symbolize political struggles to reductive forces transitioning group membership to individual ends. Interestingly the students do not have to intellectually understand these mechanisms to express resistance as "feet dragging" to attempts to regulate expectations of healthy social exchanges.

In line with social constructionists, absent here is an argument for essentialist cultural core ethnic traits. This conceptual position opens the analytical door to processes of adaptability, conflict and participation; in doing so counters a repetitious cataloging of identity distinctions and instead emphasizes variability and multiplicity to approximate a more full range understanding of identity formation. Central to this study is the phenomenon of identity differentiation in terms of its cultural, symbolic, and socio-

political manifestations on the lives of Chicano Latino youths as individuals and collectives. As identities become marked by boundaries of “distinction,” it becomes obvious that the junctures of manufacturing difference is where we must look; the focus of the project undertaken here (Bourdieu 1977). The contemporary understanding of identity articulates it as a multidimensional, dynamic process of self and exterior imposed definitions accompanied with associated expectations, norms, behaviors and perceived roles within explicit contexts leading to a definitional “we feeling” (Ogbu 2008).

This project’s research model is context specific; the multidimensional phenomenon of schooling is examined with attention on individuals; but more explicitly on the relationships and concrete interactions forming identity domains that regulate individuals, their respective social groups and the scholastic society in which they exist. The work here presents the model of healthy social networks juxtaposed within institutions that are not only unappreciative but systematically work to interfere with systems of trust. There is much to say regarding schooling and identity formation, but more precisely the two points addressed are: 1.) How social categories as peer group domains become not only creative acts of reproduction and but more meaningfully socialization *acts of becoming Americans* , 2) All students share the schooling experience understood as identity transformations where ethnic membership is deemphasized and subtracted in order to meet the objectives of individuality- a phenomena more visible among recent immigrants.

Attention to individual and group identity is positioned in significance due to its association with “race,” nationality, and ethnicity as key identity domains carrying extensive range of implied meaning as well as the consequences as sources of differentiation on the lives of individuals. Differentiation is explicitly used in contrast to diversity because of this research’s emphasis on acts, consequences and effects. In this work, diversity is framed as simply the recognition of difference; whereas differentiation is the explicit emphasis or manufacture of difference for its necessary justification in execution of differential treatment, distribution and or access to resources, prestige and or power.¹²

This address repeats contexts of mandated school attendance as social requirements intended to assure reproduction of social institutions, roles, norms and culture (Althusser 1971; Bowels & Gintis 1976; Bourdieu 1977; Giroux 2001). Students must learn to see, build and act on the requirements of the greater social arrangements they are a part of and which they ultimately will inherit. It becomes imperative that they be able to reproduce the totality of the society they belong to-“the good the bad and the ugly.” School divisions and groupings expressed in Jr. High are the projections of the multi layered, dynamic relationships and complex social arrangement as a totality of socialization.

Schooling Relationships of *Confianza*

This work examines specific patterns of schooling by highlighting “various levels of rituals of marginality function[ing] to subordinate, exploit and marginalize local

¹² Conversations with Michael Kearney.

populations" (Velez-Ibañez 1983; 206). The most pressing conclusions from this research are the visible mechanisms of intra ethnic differentiation juxtaposed within the scholastic programs of socialization. School participants process an agenda where social distance is valued over intimate group networks of trust, evident in peer group social categories. Unlike elementary, where young children exist in a default of healthy reciprocal relations, middle school offers a "rude" awakening. "In elementary we used to kick it. We were all friendly, but here [in Adams], we don't. Here it's like bam! I don't know you...How rude!"¹³

The move to a larger schooling format introduces an exhaustive subtractive program where every moment applies forces attempting to break down prior established perceptions of trust and health. Students quickly learn to see one another as types and manage their exchanges with in guidelines of safety. In a playground conversation on the topic of extending friendship to other "cliques", a group responds: "it's not that easy. You can't just go over there and say hi. It's scary...what if they do something."¹⁴

The cultural unit addressed as *confianza* (trust), serves as conceptual filter to enrich education analysis and discourse but only as more literal interpretations consistent to anthropology's frame of *confianza* accessing systems and networks of reciprocal exchanges functioning as adaptive strategies (Lomintz 2002, Valenzuela1999; Vélez-Ibañez 1983). Trust is fundamental to human interactions, but intensified in importance under situations of uncertainly and unfamiliarity-a description corresponding to the

¹³7th grade female student compares the change from elementary school to middle school.

¹⁴ Group responds to question, "Why don't you go over there (skater group) and say hi?"

experience of new middle school students but exaggerated by recent immigrant youth.

The *Recien llegados* (recent arrivals) rely on a culture of dense social networks of support where degrees of trust provide access to libraries of resources to cope and offset new context (Stanton Salazar 2001).

Research Design, Methods and Data

This project elaborates on “minority” education projects in its placement of intra-ethnic differentiation as investigatory anchor. Intra-ethnic differentiation among Chicano-Latino school youth is defined as an experience of community fragmentation where members express distinct in-group differences that contrast an external appearance of homogeneity and or solidarity. Research with ethnic minorities has consistently “compared the minority sample with a White sample” and more troubling has been the pattern of assessing the White sample as the norm which defaults the minority sample to “deficient or abnormal” (Phiney & Landin, 1998: 91). This work frames school youth participation in social cliques within a normative adolescent development perspective. In order to capitalize on a specific ethnic group’s version of the pattern of scholastic social identity formations, a *within-group* investigation model is applied to limit comparisons. My goal is to approximate an emic perspective. The research community as an adolescent student population informs and guides the research on the key identity constructs and performances. The students define the intra-ethnic taxonomy in contrast to researcher, literature, or institutional established definitions. The extent of preset tools is limited to definitional hypothesis assessing a disaccord between the institution’s categorization of Chicano Latino ethnic identity diversity and the lived playground intra-ethnic differentiation. The goal of constructing folk taxonomies of the scholastic cultural identities in order to understand how student’s perceive, interpret, and organize cultural diversity consciously omits operationalizing intra ethnic groups via sociometric instruments, prior to field entry (Bernard 2002). The students speak for themselves.

This study follows a normative process of social identity formation as part of the school process counter-posed to a common practice of examining “Brown” and “Black” communities with contexts of dysfunction. This research deviates from many research models finding schools as locations where different social groups meet (Foley 1990; Bourdieu 1977; Willis 1990, Eckert 1989). Unlike other researched schools, Adams demonstrates a segregated phenomena where the perceived homogeneous community (low economic, Chicano Latino) limits the available inventory material. Within the narrow selection emerges a pattern of identity reproduction of idealized archetypes as well as creation of alternative and innovative identity forms. Though the education system is the background, it is important to express that this is not simply another study of Chicana/o Latino education but an in-depth address of identity constructs and relationships within education. Identity is the unit of analysis.

The middle school environment is significant in that it's a point of transition for students. They are not the children of elementary, nor the young adults of high school; this phase is the beginning of the teenage years. This text frames identity as an act-a-verb, an action and documents the experiences of children as they act out the process of becoming. By high school the model of social groupings is already naturalized and set (Eckert 1989; Everhart 1983). Middle school is the place where students are formally initiated into the school categories; it is here where they “get schooled” in the ways of differentiation: “I remember being in [elementary] and talking with my friends [about Jr.

high]...we'd sit and talk what about [groups] we'd hang out with. My sister was already a 7th grader...she said I could hang out with her.”¹⁵

Locating, Identifying and Gaining Entrée

One of the first challenges I faced was identifying the scholastic identities of the kids. Identity was framed as materially expressed. I operated under a model reliant on symbolic meaning, culture as an acted out document (Geertz, 1975). My task was simple-observe, listen, interact and the identities would reveal themselves. The difficulty came as I realized that I was possibly too much of an outsider. I was an adult attempting to enter the world of adolescents. I could not “blend-in.” The students applied their own identity classification on me. Adults on school grounds exist in strict “boxes” of classification. Aside from being a parent I could only be a representative of the school system- a teacher, campus cop, TA, or counselor. The more I visited the easier it became to minimize my outsider status. Although I never reached full insider position (for obvious reasons), I did attain enough trust and insight into their youth school world, to be able see what and how they saw and thus construct ethnographic maps of their socio-cultural terrain. This project was approached with a clear understanding of the complications and research disparities involved in undertaking issues of identity within an ethnic minority youth culture. It was frustrating to see the majority of up to present research dealing with ethnic minority adolescence characterized by its attention to the

¹⁵ 8th grade, female student responds to follow up question: “did you know Jr high was going to be like this [social cliques]?”

“problematic aspects of [minority] adolescence, such as delinquency, academic failure and teen pregnancy” (Mcloyd, Steinberg, 1998: iv).

The research trend with ethnic minorities often follows a comparative between-group model that implies an assessment of perceived homogenous groups which compares and contrasts distinct groups in order to draw conclusions of their respective experiences, traits or associations. I set out to contrast a *between-group* approach to the investigation of identity, ethnicity and cultural distinctions with a prime concern to document a specific cultural phenomenon; my intention was to map scholastic identity domains. Although multiple educational interpretations have characterized “Chicana/o school failures” as rooted in disinterest and incompatibility, my research in urban education identifies scholastic identity performances as acts of differentiation instructing the students of multiple identity roles each regulating resources as predicated on a structural design (Valencia 1991). This work reveals intra-ethnic differentiation as foundational in framing the context in which participants learn to divide and live out built identity schemas and calls attention to advance education research into complementary yet new scholarship terrain.

The interpretation and clarity of cultural domains was documented as they were performed, voiced, experienced and thus reified by the students, adults and institution. This relied in a full immersion into an adolescent society existent within a public school ecosystem. I had to jump into the world of school kids. The research design models a “classic” anthropological approach to community study in its ethnographic use of

participant observation and use of key informants, but is supplemented through the incorporation of quantitative data sets. Interest in a multi-method research technique lies in the methodological objective of “*ethnographic realism*” (Axinn W. G. et al, 1991).

The project followed the academic school cycle. Participant observation was the primary tools of investigation in order develop a sense of the local identity categories. Once familiarized, my objective shifted to the identification of key informants as guides and teachers of “how to see the student group the way they [do]” (Foley, 1990:218). The creation of folk taxonomy is representative of the intra-ethnic variability established by student cohorts identifying and organically arranging themselves consistent with free list and elicitation techniques as methods for identification of cultural domains (Bernard, 2002). This research strategy was chosen in hopes of producing a more natural arrangement reflective of actual lived identities. I do not discount the quantitative instruments available for data collection, but instead opt for a multi-method research technique, incorporating ethnographic approaches with survey methods- a *microdemographic community-study approach*. The microdemographic community study method- most consistent with demographers- “combines the formal, structural operation with a complete, intensive ethnographic investigation throughout every phase of the data collection process” (Axinn, W. G. et al., 1991:190). The strength of this approach lies in its position to grounded theory. The research material gains significance as it substantiates theoretical assumptions and is reinserted into the research template in order to support interpretation and analysis.

Modeling the work James Spradely and prior education investigations by Valenzuela, Stanton Salazar, Rippenberger and Staudt, Foley and others; I listened to uncover the necessary questions. The search for desegregation of social identities as emically defined-folk taxonomies-becomes more meaningful when the distinct identity categories are reified by their differential meanings on the lives of individuals. The pursuit of identity categories is achieved in the unraveling of attributes, boundaries and terms as parts and kinds of relationships. In studying folk taxonomies, terms become powerful indicators as principles of inclusion and exclusion as well as a way of ordering events and objects in specific environments (Spradley, 1970). Words “*identify*”; they tell us both about what they name and what we know concerning what they name” (Garcia, 2000: 1). In this context, language is highlighted as a methodological strategy because it is a vital “repository which holds the key to our understanding...of culture” (Spradley, 1970:131). The linguistic recording of terms- identity labels-is initiated as an operationally explicit methodology that provides insight on how people order their world by analyzing the “terminological systems” as a means to understand the “conceptual principles” from which they stem (Frake, 1962:74).

Data and Sample

In early 2004 I visited and surveyed four metropolitan middle schools, all sharing a minimum 90% Latino majority. By fall of 2004 my preliminary research in Adams began-chosen not only for its 97% Chicano Latino population, but also as only center to welcome this research via formal acceptance. The data for this study are qualitative and quantitative. The research was conducted throughout the academic cycles of 2004/2005 to 2006/2007 and reflects both school and social changes. In 2005, my second season, the school changed from a three track student rotation to a traditional single calendar. Though both programs have 180 instruction days, the change reduced the student population by almost third.¹⁶ June 2006 was scheduled as my fieldwork end date; but mass demonstrations, student walkouts and highly charged immigration debates entered the school conversations and I decided to carry over my research period into the 2006/2007 student calendar. The current events of that year did not alter the initial research objectives but did enrich and contextualize activities in school.

My main data source comes from participant observation in the class rooms, cafeteria lines, the court yards and hall ways; the places and spaces where adolescents inhabit. I gained entry into this world through a tiered process of institutional permits reflecting descent power dynamics. The school principal introduced me to the assistant principal, whom then forwarded access to teachers which ultimately permitted observation of students.

¹⁶ The 2004/2005 student body numbered 2,315. The 2005/2006 term totaled 2,178. In June 2006 the middle school adopted a single track and started the school year with 1,685. The consequent years have maintained an average enrollment of 1610 students.

The observations and interviews are inclusive of a network of associates as a snowball sample that reflects the structural scaffold of the school (see table 3). Adams operates with personnel of at least 128 individual's representative of four commonly referenced partitions: 1) Administrative (Principal, Assistant Principals, Bilingual Coordinator, and Counselors), 2) Certificated Instruction (Teachers), 3) Certificated staff (Librarian, office clerks, and teaching assistants) and 4) Parent volunteers.¹⁷ A final and most overlooked component is the support staff (cafeteria, custodial, maintenance and repair workers). The last group supplies the most essential services but was consistently absent in most paper work and public lists of school profile. This employment sector proved difficult to inventory due to work commitments outside of Adam. Maintenance and repairs were sent directly from the central district offices and roved. The "cafeteria ladies" worked in other schools, only the custodians ("Mr. P and Mr. F") were exclusively employed in Adams.

¹⁷ Data from conversation with School Principal and internal document, "Staff Profile"

Table 1: School Staff profile

Table 1: School Staff profile				
School scaffold	Title	Individuals sampled	Percentage sampled	Total Adults: 134
Administrative	School Principal	1	100	1
Administrative	Assistant principal	4	100	4
Administrative	Counselors, Bilingual coordinator, Title 1 Coordinator	4	0.80	5
Certificated Instruction	Multi subject Teachers	26	0.28	92
Certificated staff	Librarian, office staff, teaching assistant	5	0.30	15
Parent worker/volunteer	1 paid , 11 volunteer parents	6	0.50	12
Support staff	Cafeteria, custodian, repairs	3	0.50	6

Source: Adams Middle school Internal Documents and authors research data collection 2005-2006

Adams is typical of most urban middle schools and is especially representative of the second largest school district in the nation, LAUSD with 2,300 students administered as two separate schools, fragmented into three separated attendance tracks represented a research challenge. My sampling task was made manageable by up-scaling. As mentioned above, I gained access to the different individuals and sections via introductions. Moving throughout the school scaffold allowed both an organic and piece meal opportunity to validate, assess and form an understanding of the school informed by the respective positions encountered-people had different things to say depending on they were in the school arrangement.

The observation point of entry began with English as Second Language (ESL) classes, a selection designed to access the recent immigrant population-a validated identity group as both institutionally (official) and peer (unofficial) recognized. The recent immigrant student community served as both investigation starting point and anchor. The ample data comparing “Mexican immigrants,” “Spanish dominant,” “un-accultured” versus “acculturated,” “U.S. born,” “English dominant” and concluding drastic school performance disparities prompt continual educational address (Matute-Bianchi, 2008; Stanton-Salazar,2004; Valenzuela,1991; Ogbu, 1991). The focus of this project is not school “performance” as academic success but performance distinctions of Chicano Latino ethnicity in trends toward understanding community ethnicity heterogenously.

Shortly after the 2004 holiday season break (coinciding with the end of my rapport building stage), I was permitted to administer a survey. Attempting to survey 2300 students was resource prohibitive and instead I opted for handing the questionnaire to the classrooms already in my research network and committing to include new members as my research unfolded. Between May and August of 2005, I surveyed 87 students from six classrooms distributed throughout three teachers representing four subjects (see table 2: phase 1).¹⁸ The first respondent sample revealed a composition of 98.79% Chicano Latinos representing English as second language (ESL), English fluent speakers, Magnet students and grades 6 and 7.¹⁹ Except for the ESL class, all surveys were independently completed. For the ESL Class Ms. M, read the question out loud and the students responded on their own. At the request of the school principal, the original survey did not include-“potentially dangerous or sensitive information”-questions inquiring family income, national origin, employment, and residency or immigration details were absent. I originally worked within research correlations in English language level differences among the students as signals of a distinction between non-recent and recent immigrant (Matute- Bianchi, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999). My identification framework placed recent immigrants as non-U.S. born dominant Spanish speakers; otherwise school diagnosed as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and thus placing them in English Modified courses, commonly referenced as ESL. In later surveys, I added

¹⁸ In months between May 2005 and August 2005 My classroom visit schedule included Ms M (grade 6-ESL1, grade 8-ESL 2) Mr. Ch (Grade 7-basic math, Grade 7-pre algebra), Mr. Sh (Magnet Class Grade 6-social studies, Magnet Class Grade 7-history)

¹⁹ Ethnic Racial identification is concluded in combination student self naming and school registration data. Out of 87 student surveys, one included the term black and another Chinese. The sample represent 98.79% Latino (n=81) and 0.03% (n=2) non-Latino.

residency related questions to reduced error: “what elementary did you attend”, “how long have you lived in your neighborhood?”, “Where did you live before?”²⁰ Mirroring Stanton-Salazar’s (2001) design, residency length served as starting point criteria to mark recent immigrants, but I reduced the definition tolerance from 7 to 3 years maximum U.S. entry to adjust for age grade. Stanton- Salazar’s (2001) research population consists of high school students ranging from 16 to 19, where as my composition is of middle school adolescents 12 to 15 years of age. Institutionally available demographic information such as national origin and home language was referenced to triangulate but first hand identification by key informants, the peer group culture lead the profile outline.

²⁰ The ESL classes were my point of entry. I spent the most time with “English learners” and was able to validate my “recent immigrant” assessment though first hand conversations of their experience adjusting to the U.S.

Table2: Survey Data

Survey Data				
435 surveys 2005-2006				
Phase 1 (May-Aug 2005)				
Class Subject	Teacher	Grade level	School Program	Survey total
History	Mr. Sh	7	Magnet	13
Social Studies	Mr. Sh	6	Magnet	11
English Modified (ESL Level 1-3)	M. M	6	Regular	17
English Modified (ESL level 2-4)	M. M	7	Regular	16
Basic Math	Mr. Ch	7	Regular	14
Pre-Algebra	Mr. Ch	7	Regular	16
				87 total
Survey Phase 2 (Sept- Dec 2005)				
Class Subject	Teacher	Grade level	School Program	Survey total
English Modified (ESL Level 2-5)	Mr. R	7	Regular	17
English Modified (ESL level 1-3)	Mr. R	6	Magnet	21
English Modified (ESL Level 1-2)	M. O	6	Regular	17
English Modified (ESL level 3-5)	M. O	7	Regular	18
English	Ms E	7	Regular	22
English	Ms E	8	Regular	21
Art	Ms G	8	Magnet	22
Social studies	Mr.	8	Regular	19
				157 total
Survey phase 3 (Jan-May 2006)				
Class Subject	Teacher	Grade level	School Program	Survey total
P.E. Physical Education	Mr. X	6	Mixed (magnet, Regular)	18
P.E.	Mr. X	7	Mixed (magnet, Regular)	21
P.E.	Mr. X	8	Mixed (magnet, Regular)	16
Science	Mr. V1.	6	Regular	17
Music	Mr. V2	8	Mixed (magnet, regular)	18
English	Ms E	7	Regular	24
English	Ms E	8	Regular	23
Art	Ms G	8	Magnet	21
Special Education	Mr. P	Mixed (6,7,8)	Regular	4
Foreign Language (French)	Ms. H	8	Regular/ Magnet	10
				191 total
<i>Source:</i> Adams Middle School internal documents and authors research data collection				

The questionnaire purpose was twofold: 1) initiate research rapport leading to in-depth topic conversations and 2) elicitation of social identity as peer group domains. Questions began with address of class room subject, grade level, name (to avoid redundancy), and moved to a free list format. Students were asked to “describe” themselves and the students in the school. To reduce influencing respondents, the form purposefully omitted any examples as hints. When asked for clarification, students were instructed to respond as they felt appropriate. The full list can be referenced in table DL1 in chapter 3 as well as full details regarding the survey questionnaire. The survey process was repeated in two other phases, resulting in a total of 435 questionnaires, approximately 25% of the school. The consequent questionnaires expanded to a total of four questions. The word “group” was added to question 3 to emphasize collective membership. The fourth question asked students to identify which group(s) they belong to and describe them.²¹

Each distribution was representational of entry into a different component of the school apparatus (See table 2: “school scaffold section”). Adams is composed of a Magnet and “Regular” school with grades 6, 7 and 8. The certificated faculty supports all “middle school mandated subject requirements;” requiring me to survey at least one class from each subject, grade, track and school program.²² The survey provided test quantitative content but I soon incorporated interviews and focus groups to stay

²¹ Survey questions: 1. how do you describe yourself? 2. How do you describe the students in this school? 3. What kinds of groups are in this school? 4. Which group or groups do you belong too? How did you become part of this group? Please describe

²² California education standards mandate English, math, history, social studies, Arts, science and physical education. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>

consistent with my objective of maintaining ethnographic parameters; questionnaires could not replace in-depth conversations or participant observation. By fortune, the faculty was extraordinarily supportive and I was able to conduct a range of interview formats (Whole class, small group, and individual). In order to protect the students' instruction time, we imaginatively incorporated the research topics into the class context²³. I relied on the "home" teacher's already-held familiarity to facilitate class discussions following the survey instrument. Upon parental permission, semi structured and student directed conversations were also conducted.

To complement the focus on adolescent culture, I included as many adults as possible. Adults represent institutional agents executing various tasks-administrative, maintenance, counseling, clerical-always imbedded in degrees and variations of interactive relationships with youth (See Table 1). Teachers, top level administrators and parents were not only significant in imparting supplemental insight to the social domains but also demonstrate key roles in noticeably affecting the daily outcomes of adolescents; adults are primary instruments creating the settings, scripts and acts in which kids play. Lastly, but important goal was to approximate a full immersion in to the school as research community; a task which became more complex as my time progressed. I did as much as possible to include and make myself useful in order to facilitate acceptance; this included attending faculty meetings, afterschool programs, auditorium seasonal programs, emergency drills, back to school nights-any and all activities that served to

²³ Research permission was granted under the guidelines that it would not interfere with the student's daily instruction time. Teachers asked questions that coincided with the research topic. For example, a story addressing an immigrant character was guided to a class assignment on recent immigrants in schools.

gain a more complete understanding of the school. At times this meant filling in as impromptu "motivational speaker," substitute teacher or talent show judge. This project's conclusions reflect surveys, countless conversations, weekly visits totaling over 200 participant observation days spanning almost 3 years. I saw, heard and experienced much, and walk away with not only analytical conclusions but profound psycho-emotive understanding as well.

Chapters Overview

This study documents "intra-ethnic" differentiation as school cultural phenomena-the pattern of how ethnically segregated youth are initiated into peer group differentiation. My background in public education as both student and educator already validated this occurrence; kids break themselves into cliques. The social categories "nerds," "school boys/girls," and "Cholas/os," performed on school grounds are so commonly accepted as part of daily school experiences that group formations border becoming caricatures. Multiple works, academic and popular have addressed this occurrence (Eckert 1989, Milner2004, McLeod 2004). The question is what additional meaning can be inferred about school culture and peer group identity formation, when performed by an almost exclusive Chicano Latino student population? The emphasis is a comparative analysis of scholastic performances of differentiation.

The following text is a documentation intended to complicate school culture discourse and push education theory in new directions; unpacking the micro performances detailing how identity rubrics are initiated. Chapter 2 introduces the school and community. This is the setting and collection of adolescents included in this study.

This is the “home” context that exists unaccounted in the class rooms, hallway and playgrounds but none-the-less possesses great wealth of history, background experience value potential. Chapter 3 presents the school social identity categories as student and teacher demographic profiles, followed by examination of the folk taxonomy as reflective of value worth exchanges. The school social categories are inserted into the discourse of relationships of trust. In addition, identification of school labels demonstrates more than simple reproduction of adult classifications but finds obvious creations of non local categories. Chapter 4 concentrates on the culture of schooling by contextualizing two separate programs in operation: 1) adolescent playground and 2) adult institutional. The recent immigrant group is presented as center of analysis in order to demonstrate the mechanics involved in identity formation, change and lived experience. The “lived identity” model is used to materialize the experiences of recent immigrant students and show the official and unofficial assimilation project undertaken in national identity building. The key points here are 1) the difference between students as ethnic peers versus the institution’s understanding of American assimilation models and degrees of applicable adoptive success for the “*chuntaros*,” *recien llegados*” as literal and symbolic outsiders. 2) Socialization of peer group categories become the visible process of identity transformation as transitions from group membership to individual. Chapter 5 is an address of uniforms and the body. I began this project limited to scholastic social identity differentiation and was surprised to find myself invested in the role of the school as an institution, an agent of the state as highly active and invested in processes by which Brown kids are bombarded with issues of identity manipulation, and the multiple

consequences as well to such actions of differentiation. The more I visited; I began to see little brown bodies “getting schooled” by penal-like institutions. I focus on uniform use in student’s daily activities to emphasize the constant and continuous corporeal regulation. Chapter 6 is a concluding review of the school taxonomy as an assessment of reproduction and resistance theory in education. The conversations of conflict and contradictions become basic premises of my hypothesis of the disconnection in vision and understanding of scholastic identity domains-intra ethnic differentiation. This project culminates as applied work expressed in parent workshops and teacher “in-service programs” as challenges to deterministic models of students, institutions, agency and participation. The ultimate goal here is intervention and participatory disruption.

Chapter 2 : The setting-space and place

The state of California enrolls over six million students spread throughout 9,000 schools providing approximately 11,500 hours of instruction in the course of an adolescent's school career.²⁴ Of this diverse student population, Latinos hold a majority representation of 46 percent but nowhere else does the demographic profile amplify as in the city of Los Angeles. With a 61.3 percent is a Latino student population, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) supports the many discussions on the persistent need to address Chicano Latino issues in education and secures the public school relevance due to its direct participation in the construction, modification, and reproduction of social identities of student subjects.²⁵

Theories in social reproduction support the view that schools are places where consequent generations are modeled; they are sites of confirming and conferring society (Levitas 1974; Spring 2000). The following chapter introduces the neighborhood as not simply complementary but as an essential component for understanding the school study. The surrounding "parent" community represents an extended context as an extensive repository of rich lived experiences-i.e. *funds of knowledge* (Velez Ibanez & Greenberg 1991). Unfortunately a divide between the home and school persists and students enter schools that are not only ignorant of respective family and community histories but actively devalue their potential resources as evidenced in "cultural conflicts that may arise when Mexican children confront educational models of the dominant society that

²⁴ State of California Education Profile, FISCAL YEAR: 2003-04. <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/>. Feb. 16, 2005. Hours calculated from a 160-day school year with a 6-hour school day over a 12-year period.

²⁵ California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Office (CBEDS, sifade03 4/26/04)

seek to reshape Mexican children culturally and socially according to its values” (Velez Ibanez & Greenberg 1991; 325).

Urban Chicano Latino youth home experiences are better served when not rationalized as patterns of inappropriate neglect and resource denial but instead advanced through an analysis of divisions functioning via dense and multi layered relationships expressing systems of (or lack of) *confianza* as structural features of marginality (Velez-Ibanez 1983).

School and (South) Central LA Community

Opened in 1911-originally established as an elementary school, named Thirteenth Street-Adams is one of the oldest schools in Los Angeles.²⁶ In 1923 the school was restructured and expanded into its current middle school format. In stark contrast to its first makeup as primarily upper middle class White-except for two Mexican surnamed students-today Adams is 97 % Latino, Mexican dominant and is representative of the urban school.²⁷ With a dense student population (1670 attendees), composed primarily of a non white ethnic group (Chicano Latino) and correspondent with low socioeconomic demographics, Adams reifies the archetype of the “inner city school” (See Table 3). The architecture of Adams dates back to the Art Deco period and post World War II construction-dates of its last structural renovation-and has not changed much in the past sixty years. It is

²⁶ Adams Middle school archive, Year Book 1924, Adams middle school library.

²⁷ Adams student profile indicates a yearly increase of Latino students. The past 10 years the school has shown a minimum 90% Latino presence. The average for the past 5 years is 97.16 with a range from 96.1% in 2004/2005 to 97.9 % in 2008/2009

reminiscent of mid 20th Century Americana.²⁸ The dim hallway lined lockers; turquoise green cafeteria, heavy metal doors and grey outer paint are reminiscent of a bygone era. Often movie scouts use this school to film and recreate dates from 1940's to 1960s²⁹ This South Central School-now more central than south-appears as a time capsule; there is much to uncover and read.

Table 3 Student Racial Ethnic Profile

Table 3 Student Racial Ethnic Profile															
Year	AI/Alsk		Asian		Filipino		Pac Isl		Black		Hispanic		White		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
2006-07	3	0.2	8	0.5	1	0.1	0	0	25	1.5	1630	97.6	3	0.2	1670
2005-06	4	0.2	10	0.5	1	0	0	0	54	2.5	2103	96.6	6	0.3	2178
2004-05	3	0.1	12	0.5	2	0.1	0	0	70	3	2224	96.1	4	0.2	2315

Source: Adams Middle School Internal Documents (LAUSD)

The Adams neighborhood is nestled among major Los Angeles land marks- nationally renowned private university USC, Exposition Park, the city's Natural History museums and Memorial Coliseum, site of the 1932 and 1984 Olympics plus Convention Center Staples Center and entertainment complex "LA Live" as more recent additions-yet suspiciously remains in their shadows. The infamous LA freeways-10 (east/ west) and 110 (north/south)-serve as clear borders marking the community's foremost structural outlines (See Images A). Central Avenue as former "black city" artery marks this areas eastern limit (Smith 2006).

²⁸ Insert source description of period architecture. A cross of mission revival with post WW II

²⁹ Conversation with film crew in May 2006; filming scenes for movie to take place in 1950's. Name of film unknown.

Though the school's attendance registry represents 2.8 square miles stopping on Martin Luther King Avenue, it is more accurate to "go all the way up to the rail road tracks on Slauson," thus extending community identification to 5 square miles.³⁰

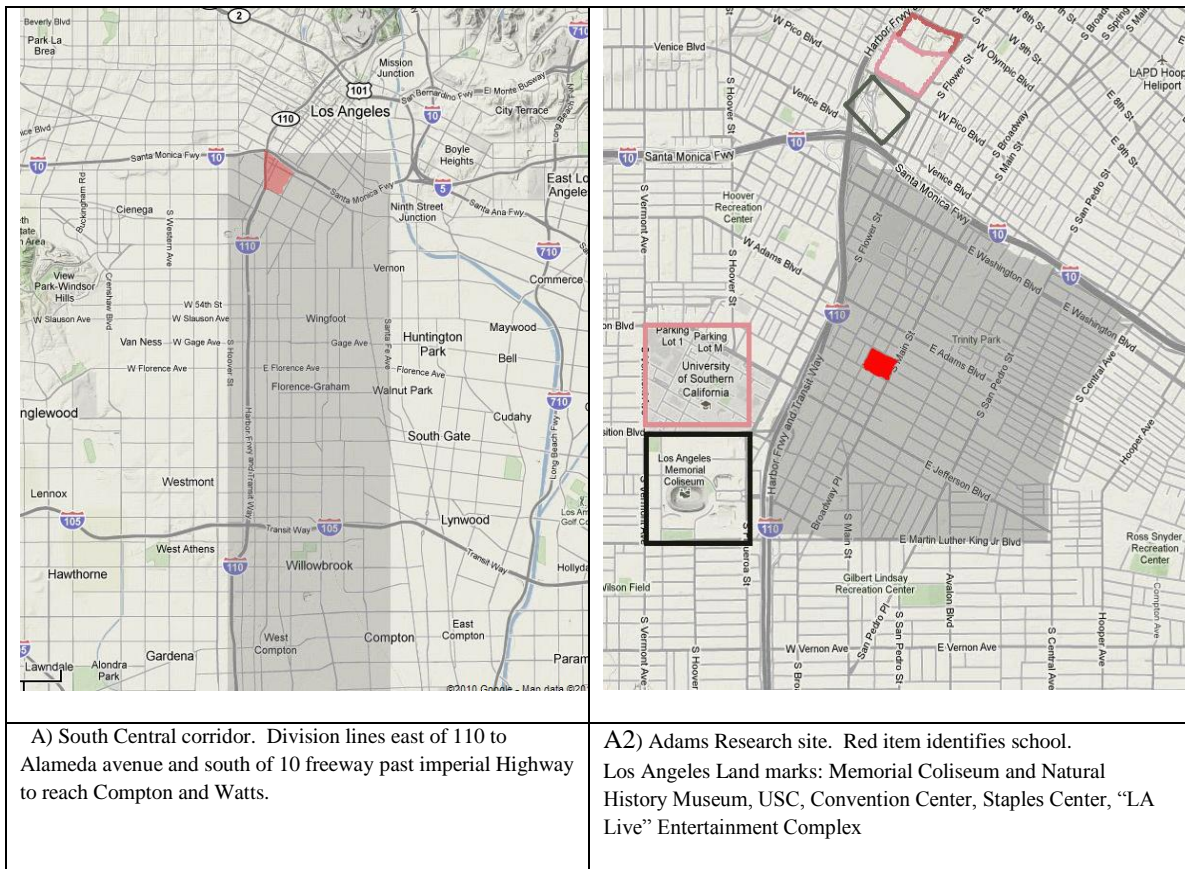
Zip code changes, census, and city boundaries have reordered this community in ways that have threatened to redefine the neighborhood identification; yet at least symbolically, this community's "urban identity" persists. The freeways and tracks are direct reminders of the cities past segregation divisions. It is called South Central but it is more appropriate to refer to it as Central LA. The city of Los Angeles has grown and the once suburbs south of downtown is now Central LA. The clear freeway divide separates the present revitalization of new capital and young hipster urbanity occurring in downtown and begins entryway to South Central. The city's street numbering radiates from the civic core and extends south. City hall is near First Street. The higher the numbering, the further cultural relevant residency appears. Aside from symbolic, there is a tangible socio-political distance from the center: "We're right at the border [Adams on 28th]. It starts getting bad here, but not like when you're down on 50th, 112th [Watts] or 185th [Compton] ...that's when you're deep in the hood?"³¹ Like Watts and Compton, Central LA retains the systematic socio economic neglect and stigma. South Central carries coded euphemisms for "Black" and "Inner city", referents expressing previous dominant occupancy of African Americans (Abu-Lughod, 2007). Today the African American community with a 12% neighborhood presence and 2 % school composition is

³⁰ Male student, 7th; responds to question, Where do you mark your community

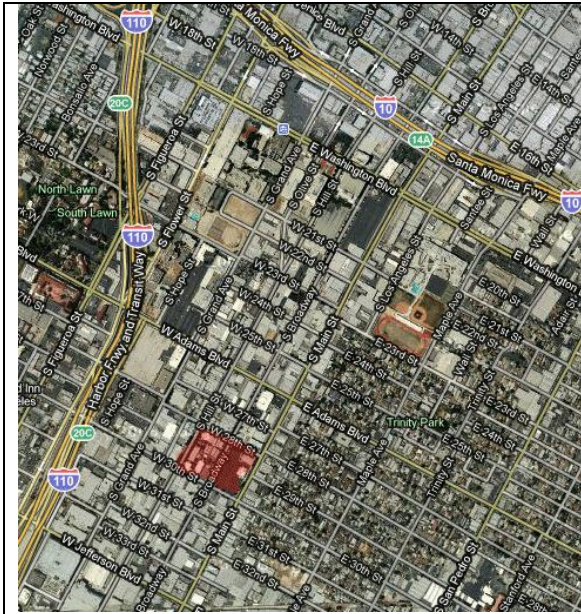
³¹ Mr. O, Teach for America Instructor (originally from Seattle) speaks on his experience driving south on the avenue Broadway Avenue.

only a complementary ethnic peer group in the area; South Central was gone from “Black to Brown.”³² Adams is Latino dominant because South Central is presently Latino.

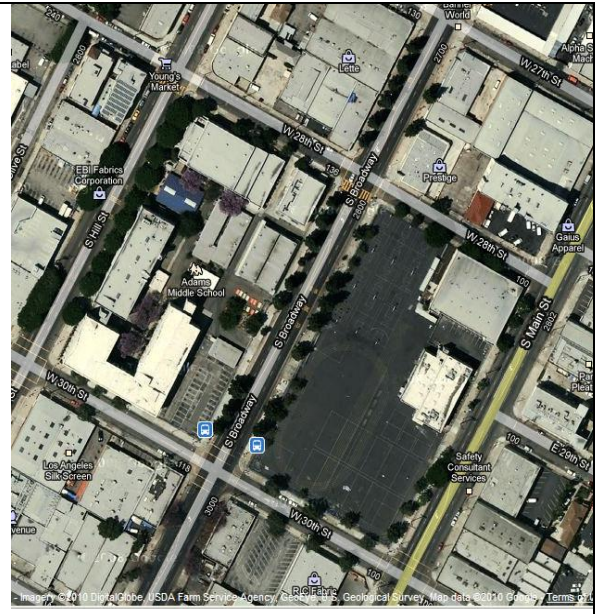
Images A: Research Map setting



³² Sources: US Censuses and school student Profile.



A3) Surrounding Adams neighborhood
Image Source: Google Maps. C2006



A4) Arial View of Adam's Campus. Physical education quad separated from main campus by S. Broadway Avenue

Latino Immigrant Central LA

Los Angeles' multiethnic characteristics differ quite drastically from cities such as New York which also hold a diverse immigrant population, where no one ethnic group is more than 5 percent of the city's minority demography. Los Angeles on the other hand is Latino-immigrant dominant, consisting of Mexican and Central Americans.³³ In the 1990 census, Los Angeles had a 31 percent community of Latino residents, predominantly from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala. By 2000, this community rose to over 45 percent with people of Mexican decent being the predominant sector of the Latinos in Los Angeles.³⁴ The school as well as neighborhood reflects a Latino immigrant population adjusting to new social, cultural, political and institutional pressures resulting in identity alterations and differences.

Although Latino presence is not new to Southern California, the 1970s and 1980s mark an influx of immigration from Mexico and Central America that ultimately transforms the city's social makeup. In the 1960s only 19% of Latinos were immigrant, by 1970 it rose to 25 %, in 1990 44.7 and presently 43 (Hayes-Bautista 2004; 91). Of the 1.7 million Latinos in Los Angeles, most reside out of the historic "eastside core" and have branched out to "occupy almost all of Los Angeles and...traditional blue collar housing tracts and suburbs" (Davis2001; 53). The rural immigrants are not recognizable to multi-generational U.S. Mexicans within the older established barrios of East LA and instead for the past 20 years, most immigrant Latinos built communities around the city's

³³ Waldinger, Roger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr. *Ethnic Los Angeles*, New York, Russell Sage. 1996 15-16

³⁴ Interpretation based on comparison of 2000 census records with 1990 census.

core (Ochoa & Ochoa, 2005). With four times the national average, of 46% foreign born designation, Central LA is one such immigrant enclave.³⁵

Over the past three decades, Latino immigration changed South Central toward its present brown version as part of residency reshuffling stemming from economic opportunity and civil rights advocacy repealing segregation policies-the very model that permitted African Americans to enter previously white neighborhoods. In the 1980s, with only 13 % of Latinos, South Central was still predominately Black (Hayes-Bautista 2004; 121). The early 1990s saw the tipping transition, as Latinos became 50%, in predominantly African American neighborhoods.³⁶ In an ironic repetition of white flight, upward mobile African Americans also left South Central toward the “Westside,” a sanctuary away from perceived urban ills. The vacancies were earnestly appropriated as a welcomed opportunity in favor of renting in dense apartments complexes around the city core. Out of circumstance and opportunity Latinos have altered the cultural cityscape to the point that “Central Avenue, the old main street of Black Los Angeles, is now 75 percent Latino” (Davis 2001; 54). Unfortunately the history of racial housing covenants, “red lining” and systematic socioeconomic neglect has left visible markers as evidenced in this communities’ median household income of \$17,644-approximately four

³⁵ Source: US Census. Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights: Zip Code Tabulation Area 90007

³⁶ Source: US Census. Census 1990 Demographic Profile Highlights: Zip Code Tabulation Area 90007

times the national poverty rate.³⁷ Recent immigrants inherit a legacy where lack of economic and political investment threatens to maintain “natural ghetto” geography.³⁸

As industries moved southward, away from downtown in response to rising property and toward worker accessibility, the areas around the school have become an urban industrial mix. *Panadaerias* alternate between liquor stores, warehouses, storefronts and unmarked garment factories-identifiable only by their bright yellow and orange signs, “*se busca ober lak*” (over lock needed). But away from the boulevard is a community lined with 1900 Victorian and 1930s craftsman style homes sporadically interrupted by 1960-70 two story multifamily apartment complexes. Conspicuously missing is the poplar Ranch style homes of the 1950-60s. “American Ranch” was widely popular in southern California in mass construction of suburban sprawl and since by the 1960s Central LA is no longer a suburb, is absent here (Walker 1993). The lack of new single house constructions is an expression of socio historic moments in Los Angeles’ 20th century development to racially White defined. The city moved away from its Native, Spanish, and Mexican phases and intended to prosper as a racially unified major metropolis; Los Angeles was to be “the white spot” (Wild, 2005). To mark the city as “White,” there was a systematic structural re-designation of social economic participation in accordance with racial ideologies as acts of differentiation. The “Foreign corners,”

³⁷ Source US Census: 41% school zip code compared to 12.4% nationally. Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights: Zip Code Tabulation Area 90007

³⁸ Mr Z, magnet AP; Comments on his experience growing up in the area: “It’s getting better all the time... but it’s been this way since I can remember... it’s your typical ghetto... it’s a natural ghetto”

residency patterns of segregated quadrants reflect this arrangement.³⁹ The black community enters Victorian houses built for Anglos. As “white flight” takes hold so too does capital; by 1960 South Central is not only Black but in light of denied banking access, new as well as remodeled home constructions cease (Abu-Lughod 1998; Avila, 2004). The apartments of this period belong to White landowners living outside of South Central, granted loans to build housing units for a growing black population unable to neither rent nor buy outside of the area; as density increases and capital flows outward, a ghetto is produced.

In the 1970s, African Americans begin to move out and Latinos renters take on the replacement roles in work, housing, social stigma and marginalization. The transition or replacement of formerly black neighborhoods reverberates through the South Central corridor. Watts and Compton became “Brown” as families pooled incomes to purchase vacant homes and are credited with breathing life into potentially endangered neighborhoods (Davis 2001; Hayes-Bautista 2004). Legal purchasing obstacles were often eased through “documented” relatives, “flexible” papers and “easy loans,” maxing out with the real estate boom of the late 1990s.⁴⁰ But by the mid 2000s, an increasing anti immigrant climate in coincidence with a real estate market collapse reduced possibilities of home ownership due to skepticism in proof of credit worth; a pattern especially visible in Central LA where 88% of residents are renters (US Census 2000).

³⁹ Mark wild (2005) describe the transition from mixed neighborhoods to demarcated ethnic/ racial section of Los Angeles city.

⁴⁰ Conversation with parents, supported by Real Estate industry circulations
http://www.hispanic5.com/undocumented_immigrants_buy_into_home_owning_dream.htm

Neighborhood Features

Adams' 1600 plus students come from immigrant majority families.⁴¹ The parent work force is employed mainly in the service and manufacture industry; employment characteristics representative of the segmented labor market of U.S. society (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000; Davis 2001). The tier system of employment placement corresponds with targeted social political and ethnic boundaries. Recent immigrant Latinos find niche placement in labor markets where legal documentation and English fluency are not essential-patterns replicated in surrounding community.

The school is sandwiched between three major avenues that once moved commerce in and out of downtown; today they move workers (See Image A4). Unlike other more disconnected South Central communities-like Watts and Compton, where a lack of public transportation to employment venues restricted income access-this community's capital flow is "dependent on [LA s] notoriously poor public system" as workers transport to the garment district (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000;145). Located 5 miles away in the heart of the city and with 2.7 billion dollars of potential wages; the garment district employs a Latino majority work force (Kyser & Huang, 2003). Today Main, Broadway and Hill avenues are lined with small store front subcontractor shops and apparel industry related employment feeding the local economy but literally bisecting through the school. Students cross under tunnels (one for boys and one for girls) to reach the physical education yard which echoes with rhythm sounds of sewing machines (See

⁴¹ Conclusion based on 2000 Census and Los Angeles School District demographic profile in conjunction with author's present research.

Image B). On windy days the campus yard emulates a parade aftermath, as multi colored streamers of yarn litter the floor and rest to create a tapestry, natural woven along the 20 foot fence.

Images B: School Visuals



B1) Adams front entrance on Hill street



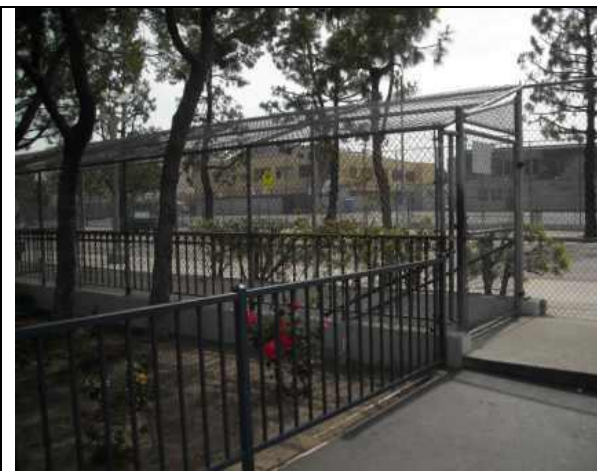
B2) Rear Entrance on Broadway



B3) Covered lunch tables. Cafeteria door entry on right.



B4) Secondary lunch tables. Tunnel entry on right. Addition building in background



B5) Male tunnel outer view. Crossway under Broadway avenue. P.E. yard and Gym in background.



B6) Tunnel entryway view.

In the aftermath of Los Angeles' 1992 "Civil unrest," South Central regained sympathetic attention only to encounter a new tenancy inhabiting an already distressed terrain. At the footsteps of a high-rise downtown skyline stood a community absent of medical facilities, infrastructural support and welfare services yet surprisingly "healthy" as represented by high labor participation, "strong family structure and low welfare dependency" as compared to US born Latinos (Hayes-Bautista D., Baezconde Garbanati, & Hayes-Bautista, M. 1994). In the shadows of downtown Los Angeles, residents strategically supported one another and in conjunction with entrepreneurial resourcefulness built a "working" community.

Nothing counters more the dismissive beliefs of "urban decay" than the weekday morning rush hour. At day break, bus stops swell with a portable street vendor economy assuring the community's daily needs. Parents purchase "office supplies" and much needed batteries for music players before dropping the kids off to school.⁴² While drinking their *Champurado* (maize drink), adults listen to the latest "Alejandro Fernandez" CD release before purchasing. The morning intersections are a vibrant support niche for a labor force on its in commute. A smaller vendor group stays behind to serve the student population. In "forbidden" transactions, "*paletas*" (fruit popsicles), "*elote con chile y queso*" (corn cob with cheese, mayonnaise and chili powder), "*fruta con chile*" and many other goods occur in quick-second exchanges the fence link

⁴² Battery sales were the most commonly observed transactions. Every adult, both female and male of various age carried a CD or MP3 to listen while at work. A visit to one such garment factory demonstrated almost unanimous use of a headset to listen to radio programming or personal music.

openings. In both adult and young market exchange versions, there exist patterns of *encargos* (requests) and *le debo* (I.O.U.'s): “*Le encargo el nuevo de Café Tacuba?*” (Can you get me new Café Tacuba CD)? or *Oiga señor, deme un elote y se se lo debo*” (Hey Sir, give me a corn cob and I’ll owe you). Demonstrated here is a high degree of intimate trust or *confianza*; vendors risk investing in procuring merchandise without assurance of a sale or forgiving their goods solely on verbal promises of repayment. Indeed, the high degree of return payments on such risks furthers *confianza* in the community. Trust is also common among strolling vendors throughout the neighborhood. Both Latino and African Americans walk out of their homes to buy fresh fruit and vegetables from a grocery truck, fresh bread from baskets affixed to modified bicycles, or tamales out of grocery carts; no receipts, business licenses nor food permits are required.

Playing on the form of the “swap meet,” these “mini-meets”⁴³ represent a form of entrepreneurial accommodation. Two to three vendors setup in vacant after hour factory parking lots to sell home toiletries, cell phone accessories or kitchen wares. The competitors appear redundant since items sold can be found in liquor stores, but their market share success lies in convenience and cost. The in-store products are more expensive and the sheer variety of parking lot vendors, means any last minute items are attained a corner walk away. Later in the evening “Taco Trucks” arrive, battery powered

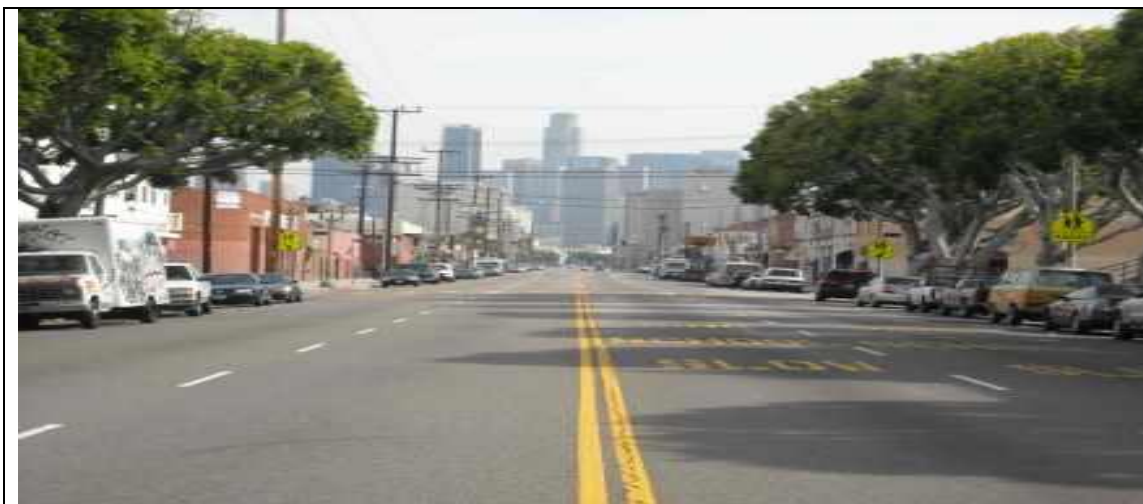
⁴³ 8th grade male explains the corner vendors, “You know?. They’re like swap meets, only smaller...they’re mini-meets.”

lighting, tables, seating and hand washing stations are arranged in order to serve highly varied menus to hungry patrons, feet from the passerby of cars.

South Central is known for absenteeism of major chain retailers; confirmed in the post civil unrests reports of 1965 and 1992 and true today. The corporate scale niche market is met by a single Latino themed supermarket (*Numero Uno*) and the Alameda swap meet. A mile's distance from Adams is the Alameda swap meet. Here weekends swell with busy patrons who can find; fresh fruit, Asian consumer import electronics, clothing, tools music and any imaginable goods. The collections of sounds, smells, foods and energetic atmosphere are transformational; this is a plaza "outing" without leaving the neighborhood. Though essential services such as eating establishments, retail and recreation are provided by small startup businesses and an informal local economy, downtown still serves as an important outlet for this community. As "white flight" created attendance vacancies, Los Angeles' core increasing became occupied by an immigrant Latino community. This transition was compounded in the mall era of the 1980s & 90's where down town lost over a quarter of its vacancy (Loukaitou-Sideris 1998). For over twenty years, downtown has been the recreation and shopping outlet for the peripheral residents. References to Los Angeles' "dead downtown" ignored the daily inflow of attendees infusing life in to the jewelry district, clothing lanes and restaurants. The now trendy locales like "Grand Central Market", "Clifton Cafeteria" and "*El callejon*" (the alley) were simply customary venues. The antiquated game arcades and movie theaters-architecture signals of a bygone era-served as equivalents of grand mall multiplexes. Downtown was alive to immigrant Latinos to such an extent that in 1989,

the “Fiesta Broadway”-Latino/Cinco de Mayo themed celebration- was created attracting 500,00 attendants.⁴⁴ Today this pattern is changing. Downtown is in the process of “revitalization” and it does not include immigrant Latinos. The urban renewal program as visible gentrification moves in a wealthier young “White” population and pushes out “Brown” families. Vacant buildings have been converted to luxury lofts and a multibillion dollar entertainment venue has been erected-“LA Live.” There is a new vision for Los Angeles’ center transforming neighborhoods in all directions yet it is not inclusive of immigrant Latinos, Downtown remains an ever present icon in the lives of students. The great view of the downtown sky line marks a boundary at the feet of Adams in Central LA (See Image C).

Image C: Downtown View



C) View of downtown from front door of Adams on Hill street

⁴⁴ Fiesta Broadway facts sheets: http://www.hprala.org/fiesta_facts.php

The Middle School: John Adams

It is the first day of a new school year; Middle school is off to a start. The students gather at the quad awaiting school to begin. Some sit on the floor and chat with one another on the previous day's events while others-returning from a 2 month break-catch up and chat about their vacation; others play or t ext while waiting for friends to arrive. The bell rings at 7:45 am to kick start the routine. The student body begins a ritualized choreography as they find their way to first period. Over the inter-com a voice announces: "welcome back C track! Hope you're ready for a great year" continued by a reminder, "Attention all students! There is no socializing while getting to class, go promptly!" Teachers take their posts and herd the students along with: "Good morning ladies, hurry up! Don't be tardy! Tuck in your shirts gentlemen!" Students fill the hallways; they bring the passage ways to life with chatter and laughter; they are energized. The newbie's run while the cool stroll. They exchange glances of flirtation, tense glares and curiosity. The hall ways are claimed; it is the students' space just before they make their way into class, ready to get schooled. This is middle school, junior high at John Adams.

Adams is like any other school across the United States, posters on the wall announce a dance on Friday after school. Tickets are 5 dollars and can be purchased during lunch at the student store. Walking down the hall at 8 AM, one can hear classes in session. Peering in anyone will be hard pressed to notice anything peculiar. Desks arranged in isles facing a board where teachers lecture and run activities. During nutrition break on the first floor cafeteria, students in lines fill the room with chatter.

Tables grouped by friends, cohorts, and cliques are familiar visions to most attendees of the American education system. It is difficult to mark anything peculiar, except for a peculiar detail in which of the 1,670 students that make up this school, 97 percent are Latino with the remaining percentage African-American (2%) and Asian (1%). This demographic characteristic is important in that it signals that for all the normative scholastic patterns and rituals that are experienced here, they are in fact expressing a version that has a cultural/ethnic essence. This is a “brown” version of the school life clichés. The school experience is performed within a specific Chicana/o Latino context, rooted in socio-political and economic marginality.⁴⁵

Table3 Student Racial Ethnic Profile

Table 4 Student Racial Ethnic Profile															
Year	AI/Alsk		Asian		Filipino		Pac Isl		Black		Hispanic		White		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
2006-07	3	0.2	8	0.5	1	0.1	0	0	25	1.5	1630	97.6	3	0.2	1670
2005-06	4	0.2	10	0.5	1	0	0	0	54	2.5	2103	96.6	6	0.3	2178
2004-05	3	0.1	12	0.5	2	0.1	0	0	70	3	2224	96.1	4	0.2	2315

Source: Adams Middle school student demographic documents

Scholastic segregation may appear surprising fifty years after *Brown vs. Board of Education* outlaws scholastic separation, but considering that schools are reflections of the communities in which they are nestled-it is not uncommon for segregated neighborhoods to equal segregated campuses. Adams is part of a cluster family of

⁴⁵ Marginality is used here in line with the text “Rituals of Marginality” by Carlos Véllez-Ibañez.

schools in “neighborhoods located in the central and northeast portion of the city of Los Angeles, [around] Downtown Los Angeles, and Pico Union. These areas are densely populated and are primarily Latino, with many new immigrants from Mexico and Central America” (Alonzo, R., 2004). This middle school mirrors the ethnic distributions of the greater city of Los Angeles. Unlike cities such as New York which hold a diverse immigrant population, where no group is more than 5 percent of the city’s minority demography, Los Angeles’ multiethnic characteristics differ quite drastically. Los Angeles is Latino-immigrant dominant, consisting of Mexican and Central Americans.⁴⁶ In the 1990 census, Los Angeles had a 31 percent community of Latino residents, predominantly from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala. Ten years later that community rose to over 45 percent with people of Mexican decent being the predominant sector of the Latinos in Los Angeles.⁴⁷ The school as well as neighborhood reflects a Latino immigrant population adjusting to new social, political and institutional pressures producing identity alterations, formations and “making differences.”

Latino Immigrant Adams

As stated prior, the school reflects the surrounding community as Latino immigrant dominant. Adams middle school is one of 83 [61 Elementary, 8 Middle, and 14 High schools] within district 5 quadrant of Los angles unified eight districts. The middle school services only a partial sector of zip code 90007-a bounded community section of

⁴⁶ Waldinger, Roger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr. *Ethnic Los Angeles*. New York, Russell Sage. 1996 15-16

⁴⁷ Interpretation based on comparison of 2000 census records with 1990 census.

approximately 2.8 square miles.⁴⁸ As such, Adams is the primary institution to three feeder schools, transitioning from elementary to middle school-Norwood, 28th Street School and San Pedro Street School. The cumulative ethnic makeup of the school reflects the ethnic profile of the city's demographic segregation.

The Los Angeles school district reports a comparatively high Chicana/o Latino Population. Nationally Latinos represent 15% of population, but rises to 45% of Los Angeles's ethnic composition. District wide the Latino student community increases to 75%. With-in District 5 it escalates to 94%, while Adams holds a 97% Latino makeup. But representation of a 45% Latino presence must be translated as visible signifiers of ethnic marginality expressing socio economic segregation. The boundary tracks within District 5 display an overwhelming Chicana/o Latino immigrant majority which becomes institutionally minimized in the school as it works to make newcomers less obvious and significant (See Image B).

Central LA is signified through its immigrant status. Symbolically the outer community legitimately represents the urban immigrant experience but interestingly the opposite occurs within the school. In the neighborhood the fight over "fitting in" is for the most part complete. Local parks are comfortably claimed for *carne azadas*, and birthday parties. Latino immigrant soccer leagues may common; but inside the schools there is still a great challenge. Students enter a social context where the legitimate identity norm is non immigrant. The school world as nationally rooted is by default American (Mondale & Patton 2001; Spring 2000). Comfort and compatibility is

⁴⁸Source : http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/District_5/ms.htm

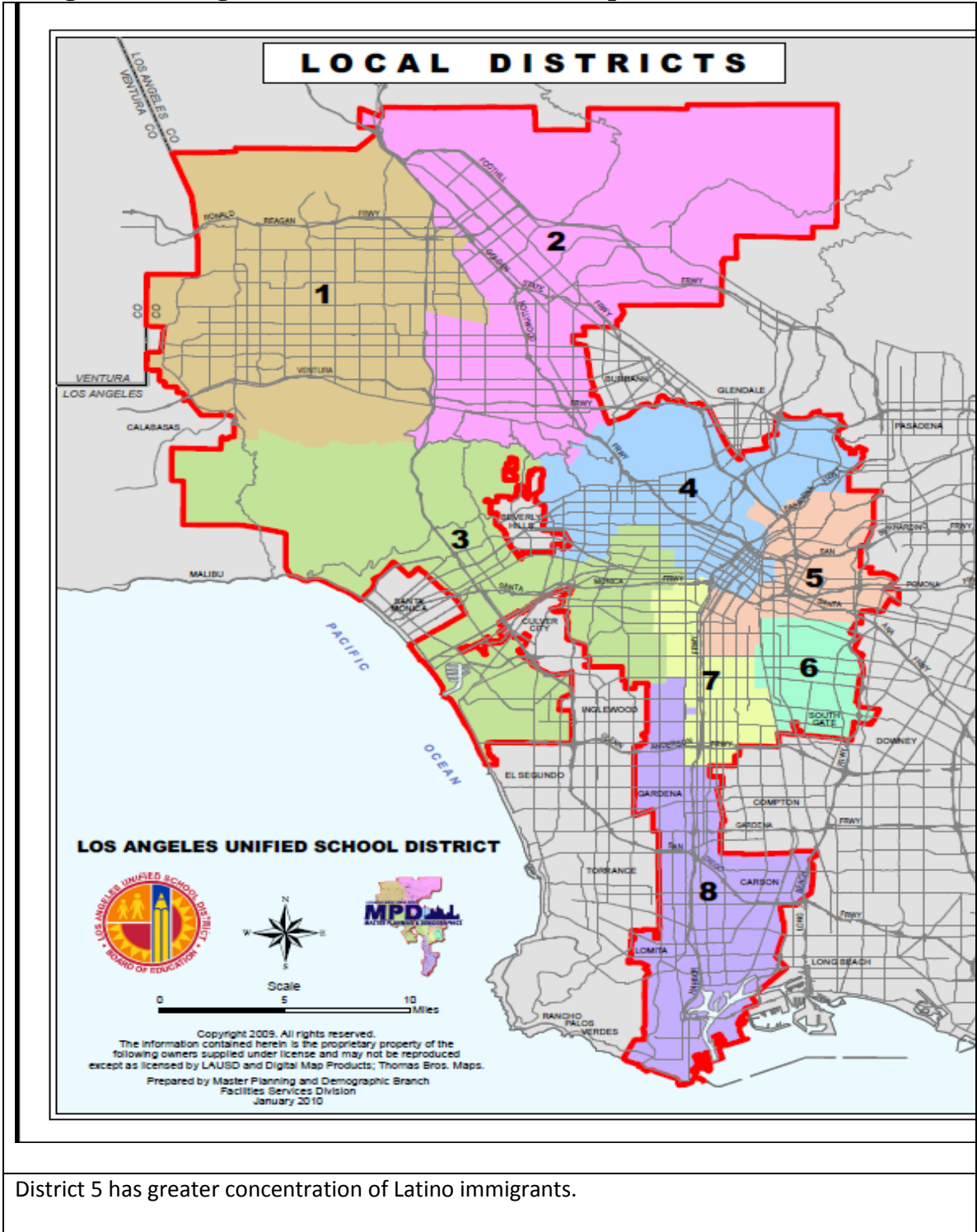
minimized as students step onto school campus, especially for immigrants reflecting new comer residency and limited English language acquisition-two offenses to an American identity. The young new comers quickly understand they are foreign and do not fit in. This outcast position, institutionally recognized as English Language Learners (ELL) composes 30% of the scholastic population. The group is numerically large enough to merit recognition but lacking “significant” political identity, is relegated to intra ethnic minority status and uncomfortably reminded by both students and adults of their transiency and questionable legitimacy (see chapter 4 for more full discussion).

Table4: English Language Learners

Table: English Language Learners Data: 2004- 2007					
Grade	Spanish	Other	Total	ELL Percent of school	Total population school
2006-2007	520	3	523	.313	1670
2005-2006	649	4	653	.299	2178
2004-2005	771	03	774	.334	2315

Table: English Language Learners Data: 2004- 2007

ImageC: Los Angeles Unified School District Map



Adams Features (physical & social political, Conversion from bad to good)

Adams presently represents-though masked-a working under class character as

expressions of its immediate "parent" community; this is a contrast to its White middle class beginnings. Few Latinos attended Adams in its early history (i.e. only two Spanish surnamed students appear in the 1911 year book) and the school maintained a White attendance profile until 1940 when southern African Americans emigrants inhabited the central Los Angeles quarter. The next major change occurs again with the Latino influx of the 1970s which re maps the community's profile from "Black to Brown." Today the student population continues to be not only predominantly Latino, but of a Mexican and immigrant character. Teachers and peer students generalize everyone as "Mexican-Mexican;" a small Central American population is negligibly recognized and most commonly expected to become "Mexicanized." The student body is Latino but the teaching staff is majority white.

The definition of a white teacher based results from lunchroom tabulations (See Table 4). Schools like most institutions operate with specific assignments. Bodies are accounted and micro managed. Wander students quickly raise suspicion and are routinely asked "where are you supposed be?" Unfamiliar adults are also questioned. Cognizant of my lack of assigned space, I chose the faculty cafeteria-in order to reduce alarm and confident it would serve as fruitful research base-from which to listen, make small talk, and introduce myself to a large staff. The school does not inventory teachers'

ethnic/ racial composition, but in agreement with my own appraisal, a veteran teacher simply said “it’s always been that way, mostly young, White and green [new].”⁴⁹

Over \$1.25 breakfasts (cheese melt and coffee) and \$2.75 lunches (burrito and juice); I met a teaching staff of mostly “young and white” professionals, very cognizant of the schools’ “inner city” status and expressing varying degrees of enthusiasm of their participation in Adams’ education. With time I heard a great collection of explanations for their teaching decision in this location. Some spoke of “romantic” notions of “changing the world,” (most obvious in the Teach for America group) while others factored money. All teachers earn a salary calculated through years of experience and tabulated education units, but working in this “Low income school” opens eligibility to federal loan forgiveness programs reducing partial to full loan amounts. According to one teacher, “you can’t beat this deal...this is my 4th year. I started with 60 grand and next year it goes to zero! It’s like getting free money!”⁵⁰ There are also district specific incentives, known colloquially as “combat pay” as additional money for after school program work or classroom enrichment supplies purchases reserved for Title I schools which attractively elevate the average \$45,000 teacher salary.⁵¹ And finally there are teachers that work in Adams because this is their sole employment offer but would prefer to work elsewhere. The teaching motives manifest themselves honestly as demonstrated

⁴⁹ Mr. V2; African American veteran teacher with over years of teaching experience, comments on the strong legacy of white teachers.

⁵⁰ Mr. R speaks of the loan forgiveness program eventually cancelling the full loan amount of \$60,000 after 5 years of teaching in a “low-income” school.

⁵¹ source <http://www.teachinla.com/Research/documents/salarytables/ttableannual.pdf>

in an overheard exchange between a veteran African American teacher and a young White new hire from out of state.

In the cafeteria during a “nutrition” break period, three teachers talk over coffees and pastries. The conversation topic is over a new hire.

Teacher 1 (White male 25-30yrs): “So you settled in? How are things working out so far?”

Teacher 2 (new hire, White female 22-25): “The classes are going well; the kids are great, everything is going well....I’m excited about working here!”

Teacher 3 (Black male, 50-55): “Yea that’s what you say now... You’ll put some years in and build experience and move on to the west side... You guys just come over here and use us” (In half jest and part truth).

Teacher1: “Oh come on Mr. V2...You know it’s not like that! Ha-ha!”

Teacher 2: silence

Teacher 3: “ha-ha...I’m just saying what I see.”

In the words of another veteran teacher, now Assistant Principal: “I’ve seen the student body change... go from Black to Brown....but the teachers look the same [white].” The teaching staff is consistent with Los Angeles school district’s recruiting pattern of hiring out of state teachers, translated to reflect a strong White teacher demographic. Adams is deviates from the pattern significantly in its heavy Latino representation in administrative positions. The top tier decision-making structure is almost exclusively “Brown.”

Table 5: Staff Ethnic profile

Table 4: Staff Ethnic profile						
School scaffold	Title	Brown	White	Black	Asian	Total 122
Administrative	School Principal	1 (100%)	0	0	0	1
Administrative	Assistant principal	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0	0	4
Administrative	Counselors, Bilingual Title 1 coordinator	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0	5
Certificated Instruction	Multi subject Teachers	17 (21.5%)	52 (57.7%)	7 (8.8%)	3 (3.8%)	79*
Certificated staff	Librarian, office staff, teaching assistant	14 (93.3%)	0	1(6.6%)	0	15
Parent worker/volunteer	1 paid , 11 volunteer parents	12 (100%)	0	0	0	12
Support staff	Cafeteria, custodian, repairs	2 (33.3%)	0	4 (66.6%)	0	6

Source: Adams Middle school, authors research data collection 2005-2006

* In 2006 there were 92 certificated teaches on record, but I only encountered 79 equaling an 85.8% sample.

Change is a key concept in Adams. Conversations with the “old-timers,” the few teachers with over 10 years of teaching experience, express great changes in this school; it has gone from a “bad to good” school. In the 1980’s- the height of difficulties-gang problems, “racial” conflict and low performance issues in test scores defined the school as “Bad,” and “rough.” Teachers anecdotally recount a sense of chaos, “It was like a war zone; every day it was something,” “I remember, at one point they started letting the Latino kids out 5 minutes early... you know, to give them a head start!”

Latino Parents with children in school during that time, remember and express a

sense of fear, “*nos daba miedo por los niños*, (we were scared for the kids). Things are different now.

Teachers now compare themselves with the neighboring middle school further south and acknowledge a difference. Adams is now thought of as the good school. A belief shared by school staff, parents and students alike. The decision for choosing Adams over the “home” school is supported by a parent’s phrase “*allá se hechan a perder*” (over there they go bad, as in spoil). The sentiment of concern leads parents to work hard to get their students into Adams, often going so far as to falsify local residency. *A mi niño no le toca aquí, pero me puse en chinga, llamando aquí y allá para ver quien me podía prestar su dirección* (My son wasn’t suppose to come here, but I hustled, calling here and there to find who could lend me their address).⁵² Parents guided by patterns of trust, access familial and friendship resources to offset believed risks elsewhere in hopes their children will get a better educational experience in Adams. These actions demonstrate a high degree of concern for the educational future of children which contrasts a much circulated stereotype that Latino parents do not value education.

Students as well as parents express a concern; almost fear of the rival middle school (Carver). Interesting here is that according to older parents and veteran teachers, twenty years ago it was another local middle school– James A. Foshay Jr. High- that was the feared school. Adams had similar gang problems, over population and limited resources, but was noticeably more dominant by a Chicano Latino student body than Foshay middle school. Foshay was the Black school. In the 1980s, Adams had a 70%

⁵² Parent find friends or relatives to serve as home address located within Adams’ enrolment boundaries in order assure attendance eligibility.

Latino student body and Foshay 70% African American.⁵³ Today Carver middle school holds - though unsubstantiated- a perception of being a “Black” school. The assumption of Carver as a “Black” school is important. Carver is not African American dominant; it does not reach 10% but it does have a much higher African- American student representation at 7.9% versus 1.9 % in Adams.⁵⁴

The concept of “racial” division as differentiation has been used in the past and continues as a significant tool for justifying conflict expressions. It is imperative that the roots of racialized markers as social boundaries be addressed. Los Angeles presently circulates an accepted discourse of divisions between the Latino and Black communities. Unfortunately it is presented as a “natural” and conscious fear of one another. This pattern became more apparent in the mass media circulation of a “brown and black conflict” during this research period. Local print, television, and radio news outlets offered daily coverage of a “brewing race war,” “LA’s little secrete.”⁵⁵ During the research season there were many stories of “race riots” in schools, as well as neighborhood riffs between Latino and African-American gangs. Though tension between these groups must be contextualized as over hyped exaggerations and obvious presentations linked to monetized media projects; it none less calls attention to a noticeable divisional issue demanding further address.

Comments such as “*ellos no nos quieren*” (they don’t like us) by Spanish speaking parents voice a concern toward an African-American other. Unfortunately the

⁵³ LAUSD archives. 1232 -241- 1000

⁵⁴ Source: Craver middle school student profile

⁵⁵ Source: NBC, ABC, FOX news, LA Times, La Opinion, 97.1 Radio.

sense of disaccord may not be necessarily an issue against an African-American community, but instead a boundary between recent immigrants as outsiders and a collective “American” insider social identity. The default American national identity must be referenced as embodied in a “White” social category; but within this segregated context, the stand-in is a corresponding “Black” community. This argument is based on the observations that the U.S. raised Latinos in the area did not voice fears of African-Americans. The absent division may be due to non recent immigrant Chicana/os Latinos sharing similar social cultural space as African Americans- poor, urban, English speaking and popular culture- and more consciously able align against a “White” social backdrop, thus minimizing any social differences.

SUMMARY

In the past 80 years the tenants of South Central and Adams have switched from White to Black and from Black to Brown yet the city’s segmented organization stays the same. The structural permanency in the neighborhood and school serve as templates for daily adolescent expressions of macro political issues. The changing faces represent disputed identity terrains of race, class and ethnicity yet the immigrant character challenges old points of view and pushes new debates. The story of Adams is the story of a city and community struggling to manage contradictions between ideals and practice. Appreciation of diversity as national and institutional principles is questioned by immigrant lives forcing a redefinition in the meaning of diversity acceptance. As old

meets new, diversity reveals it's self as differentiation. In the shadow of down town Los Angeles is a meeting place where immigrant adolescents get schooled by adults and ethnically similar U.S. born schoolmates. Students perform acts of making differences denied of structural connections to pressing reproduction patterns understood more fully in the social, political and economic history of this community-reflexivity is not required. The school is important in that it records, brings to life details and meaning of American life through systematic instruction yet the community holds the prime resources as ultimately this is the place students return home too once the bell rings.

Chapter 3 : GETTING SCHOOLED-ACTS IN MAKING IDENTITY DIFFERENCES (Intra-Ethnic Differentiation)

This research finds an exhaustive breadth and diversity of social categories made existent within a youth scholastic world, yet a surprising pattern that emerges in identifying that the inventory is relatively predictable. The vocalized divisions and groups are misleading in that they appear to hint to random responses of trends and “youth expressive culture”—a partial truth—but more accurately, categories are narrowly influenced by explicit pressures and structures. Some schools have “ballers,” “schoolies,” and “cholos” while others have “preps,” “Ear ‘Oles,” and “hoods.” The expected production of alternate school labels in different times and places is countered by replication, consistency and endurance of identity domains as living templates. Thus the experience of intra-ethnic differentiation as a Chicana/o Latino process of learning how to manufacture and see differences among themselves, relies on a balance between depicting an etic structurally identifiable world as counter to an emic understanding of personal perceptions—“to get to the things that are in people’s heads” (Harris 1976, 330). The difficulty lies in assessing etic behavior as a manifestation of emic logic and deducing meaning. The goal is to get into people’s heads via research—asking a lot of questions. The methodological approach to *eliciting operations* provides an organized and formalized means of mapping how participants envision verbally their world construct (Frake, 1962).

Peer Group Social identity: Method and Perspectives

Research into the politics of youth culture and education attempts to explain, “Why American teenagers behave the way they do?” (Milner 2004;3) How class is not only

understood and talked about by today's youth and but linked to adolescent identity aspirations and hopes; rooted in appraisals of future opportunity to who "makes it" (Friere 2007, Mcloed 1995). How schools structure youth identities in ways the reproduce multi-facet social needs (Boudieu 1970; Parsons 1956). The sustained preoccupation with youth is significant because it reveals an unfinished research polemic while demonstrating a predictable and relatively conservative approach by falling under consistent models where: 1) Youth culture is framed oppositional to an adult society in order explain homogenous generational cohorts expressing conflicts as stages of maturation (Eckert 1989). 2) Adolescent society is understood as class reproduction, consisting of two fundamental divisions- working class (poor) and middle/capitalist elite (rich) distinctions corresponding to students that "buy-in" versus those that "reject" the program (Bourdieu 1970; Friere 2007; Willis1990). 3) And finally there are works isolating race and ethnicity as intersectional sources of influence in the school experience with particular attention on issues of incompatibility, opposition and subtraction of culture as obstacles to success (Foley 1990; Fordham & Ogbu, 1992; Matute-Bianchi 2008; McLeod 1995 Stanton-Salazar 2001; Valenzuela 1999). Additionally the multiple approaches, be they a push past human development or economic identities are juxtaposed into a puzzling formula where youth represent ethnic/ racial parameters as essentialized performances housing a "Mexican" or "Black" appropriation as undifferentiated from an adult version.

The above is not a critique but an embraced review used toward a more complete examination of schooling. The multiple adolescent social categories possess different

capital types and become micro conversations of adult social, economic, political performances. Adults live in a world of capital exchanges (social, economic, cultural and symbolic) which the children must learn (Foley 1990; Pomerantz 2008). It is clear the young “play act” and “perform” as part of learning their future roles and the multiple social identities as peer group expressions cannot continue to be addressed with the objective of highlighting “problems.” The point here is that youth culture and differential performance consequences are not extensions of dysfunction or immaturity. On the contrary, given the institution objectives of socializing children into the world in which they will participate, scholastic identity domains reveal themselves as reasonable, logical and “normal” outcomes of schooling and the emphasis moves away from how schools “fail,” or why students “underperform” and toward documenting what is successful and competently learned in institutional education to “read” as purposefully required performances of intra-ethnic differentiation.

Students exist in a world of youth cultural domains fundamentally linked to adults where peer group societies express articulations to institutional influence. Students may not have full control of school curricula and routines but do create and control intricate identity relationships working with proprietary capital and power. The facilities create the outlines for an exercise in status divisions “highly reminiscent of castes” (Milner 2004; 22). Amicable proximity contrasted to disapproving social distance among students reflects conscious decisions set in logics of value assessments reifying identity constructs.

“There are many [groups]...the *rockers*, *punkers*, the *outsiders*, the *wannabees* and the *normals*. [T]he rockers and punkers cover most of the school but you can see that they are just hiding behind the music [building], but from what? The outsiders are the ones that no one wants to be with. The wannabees are well it is said in the name, they don’t really have an iden[tity] [they are always] changing to this and that. The normal are just the ones that hang out and just relax, help each other and all of the regular stuff.”⁵⁶

Development and sustenance of social categories requires common identification referents with core assumptive traits based on more ideal than factual characteristics. The social structure operates in denial of verifiable diversity by relying on generalized rubrics of difference and distinction as a cultural “glue” providing the underlying ideology which “gains hegemony as it absorbs more and more aspects of daily life” (Eckert 1989; 49). For example “Cholo” as social category is assigned attributes of gang membership, poor school performance, crime and violence. It is not possible for the student body to attest to their factual experiences of criminal history. Cholos may be academically strong (many are) and not “active” gang participants but the general assumptions are accepted as institutionalized stereotypes which in turn, serve as supporting rationale for the exercised behavior. “Yea I stay away from them [cholos]. I don’t want to join a gang... I don’t want to get shot.”⁵⁷ In a group conversation I ask-“Aren’t these [group characteristics], stereotypes?” One student responds, “Well...(uhm), kinda...yes, but we wouldn’t say it if wasn’t a little true.” Stereotypes exist as superficial group generalizations applied to individuals; intellectually they are required details to support prejudice, at which point the gut feelings and prejudgments become the basis for discriminatory actions. Stereotypes must be understood as more than minor gossip characteristics in order to

⁵⁶ Female 7th grade magnet. Written response to question- “What kind of groups are in this school?”

⁵⁷ 6th grade male discusses his fear of the “cholo” category in school.

credit as meta-messages of structural roles; they become the reasoning for identity labels informing the assigned cast(e) responsibilities- “*Emos* are loners, they cut themselves... they are always sad...the *magnets* are really nerdy...the *ballers* have it going on [wealthy], they can get down [dance] and the *punks* don’t take any shit”⁵⁸

The prevalence of identity category membership across schools in different times and places must be accepted as intimately imbedded divisions of the schools’ social fabric, naturalized as part of the school ecosystem. The groups’ appearance in middle school coincides with entry to larger more complex education arrangements where students are introduced to not only new forms of schooling but peer relationships as well. In elementary, students were guided by a single teacher in care of all material and multiple subjects spread throughout the day to a unified class body. The secondary school experience introduces changes by breaking up the student body throughout many classrooms and teachers, transmitting different subjects. The comparison of schedules produces *combination* of students creating “mechanisms to separate themselves from others” formalizing identities (Milner 2004; 28). The cohorts of friendships initiated in ESL, Magnet and AVID programs become principle social outlines. Accommodation to the changes and successful participation demands degrees of coercion and acceptance of an otherwise arbitrary scholastic diversity.

If social category membership is paramount to required roster enlistment where “everybody has a [group]...[and] it’s just part of the [school] game,” then we must

⁵⁸ 7th grade Female explains the associated characteristics of various social categories.

address “how it works.”⁵⁹ To call it a game is not facetious; all participants in this school demonstrate deep understanding of the rules. The scholastic identities in this teenage society reflect status and symbolism where elaborate and ritualize behaviors mark boundaries holistically explaining the institutions’ social order. The social formations exist in variations and degrees of interaction among individuals, sharing common identity labels, implicitly evaluating their respective placements of rank (Milner 2004; Robins 1982). “Nobody likes to be called *Chunty*...but come on! That’s what they are...they try and fit in but they just come off as *Posers* and *Wannabees*.”⁶⁰

The circulated labels carry value worth assessments which end as status credits. The phrase “you’re such *schoolie* [nerd]” is not equivalent in approval as “check out that *player*.” Given that status as well as *status-group* is achieved and ascribed, the “question arises [not] whether there is a priority order of identities” but how prioritization is expressed (Wallerstein 2004; 36). My contributory value then lies in emphasizing the way adolescents create, validate, and sustain peer relationships in order to make identities. The focus here is on relationships. The structural arrangements are “exorcised’ only by the relationships, interactions and exchanges. It is this physical activity that permits this “game” to work and allows the arrangement to become real as it moves from the abstract to material space. Given this context, it is an understatement to repeat that peers and group formations are important. Instead, we search for the place and space where relationships of such intimacy and density develop and find the optimal

⁵⁹8th grade male: “everybody has a crew they run with. It’s part of the game, you know? It’s how it works here”

⁶⁰ 8th grade female student responds to question: Do you think they [recent immigrants] like being called “Chunty”

requisite time and setting in our schooling context. Time in school permits development of membership, identification and respective role assignments in relative disconnection from family (Eckert 1989; Milner 2004; Parson 1956). Assessment of scholastic time allocation reveals that at least 34 % of scheduled routine is free peer socialization (see table x). Before and after school, during meal breaks and in hallway is credited as “free time”-complete ownership left for “kids [to] be kids,” the rest of the time the “adults are always in charge.”⁶¹ The majority adult-directed class time is deceptive in that it masks details demonstrating that students share the experience of schooling as a peer cohort. In-class instruction may be adult controlled but students are never outside of the peer culture immersion, meaning that the school is 100% student possessed.

Teachers often express their outweighed influence and sense of separation; “It’s hard getting through the day, sometimes...all it takes is one to start and then the rest jump in...just like that you’ve lost control...it’s us against them.”⁶²

Table 6 Student time allocation

Table 3 Student time allocation table													
In-class		Before school		Hallway		Nutrition		Lunch		After school		Total	
Minute s	%	Minute s	%	Minute s	%	Minute s	%	Minute s	%	Minute s	%	minute s	hour s
320	.66	15	.03	42	.08	45	.09	45	.09	15	.03	482	8.0
100% Student peer socialization													

Source: Adams Middle School Internal Documents (LAUSD)

⁶¹ “Free time” is phrase used by students and teachers for portions of school day absent of instruction. Teacher phrase: “we need a break...they need a break to be, some time for themselves, you know time for “kids to be kids.”

Student phrase: “ It always the same... they tell what to do and have to do it... it sucks, cus adults are always in-charge”

⁶²MS.G , English teacher expresses his frustration on feeling overwhelmed by the “student crowd”

The created scholastic environment supports a society demonstrating great political, economic and cultural sophistication, yet made “stupid simple” by the young that live it.⁶³ Within this habitat, adolescents perform intricate systems of resource management-both material and abstract-of wide variation and distribution “combined to produce an ecological map of the greatest interest” (Eggleston, 1994; 19). The ecological perspective forces assessment of resources represented in a school system (curricula, trips, electives, and special programs), individuals (teachers, students and support staff) and experiences.

⁶³ “Stupid simple”: phrase used by 8th grade girl when asked to explain the different groups in school. She felt the school identity world was not difficult to explain and amused by my presentation of my research project: “You can study that?”

The Taxonomic List- A Social Map

The search for a social map of how youth envision and order the school mimics linguistic techniques for eliciting phonemic systems, but appropriates them to map a school culture. However, to not rely solely on verbal responses, it also tests responses against actual behavior in the course of documentation of students' day to day performances to assess whether the identified social groups and types as labeled, are both accurately referred to and actually manifested in ways that can be checked against analytic models and thus produce a useable folk taxonomic system. This investigation into school social cliques, determines that students generate a very extensive taxonomy of social identity types as requisite divisions of their reality. They are taught to see and construct differences in social identities.

The "school universe" of classifications becomes visible as demonstrated by two major systems of operation; one official (bureaucratic, institutional) and the other unofficial (student body, socio-cultural), but both equally valid and intimately linked. The relationship of each is quite different in support, scale and vision (addressed more fully in consequent chapter). It is evident that students see a different world from what adults institutionally arrange. The contrast between the bureaucratic ordering of identities and the organic order of adolescent realities is demonstrated in differences in scope of sight and recognition of diversity-students see and do more with the categories. But seeing more does not imply autonomy from bureaucratic classification administered by the state. In fact, state documents serve as outlines and templates for an institutional

taxonomy- “race”, age, gender, nationality, income, and language. What the state sees is what the school structure sees, which ultimately affects what students see.

The students adopt a provided schema but supplement the incomplete bureaucratic inventory. The reality of a complex nation state is more closely approximated and reflected by the student body. Students inhabit a world where gender, class, sexuality, prestige, power, vanity, violence, and other structural elements are manifested consistently as real identities as part of living in a society where specialized divisions of labor, social, cultural, political, and economic stratification are the norm. The adolescent “kid play” of middle school experiences become the acts of initiation into the world of adults. This is a necessary transition phase, a key process of socialization and growth as part of becoming full members of American society.

The cultural processing of schooling requires socialization and assimilation of new forms of human interactions, leading to a noticeable worldview transformation. Comparing entering sixth graders to exiting eighth graders provides information of a process of learning and “getting schooled” best expressed as gradual accumulation of coercion and consent through ascent in grade. Twelve year olds do not see the world in such intricate divisions as eighth graders which express a much broader and detailed vision of categories. Sampled in the beginning of their school year, most sixth grades express a limited range and depth of compartmentalizing the school world-definitively “made up” of grade levels, clubs and gender, and cholos.⁶⁴ *Newbees* verbalize a limited

⁶⁴ The label Cholo is the only identity domain not institutionally [created] and carried over from their experience in elementary. Explain briefly what is significant

focal vocabulary. The terms listed below reflect the school world as finalized by eighth graders, who represent a most invested group. These students have learned and lived this world of rank and moved up from “scrubs” to “seniors.” As eighth graders they are ready to take the top position for a year.

In a homeroom at the start of the calendar year, I was privy to a curious entrance. Ms E. welcomes the class, “good morning kids hope you had a good break...This is a big year...You’re now eighth graders and that means...” before she can continue the class erupts in clapping, stopping and cheers. The now transformed eighth graders celebrate with “Hell yea!! It’s on now!”, “*por fin* (finally)!” The homeroom teacher, aware of the implied meaning, warns the boisterous group celebrating their entrance to this final grade rank by stating: “you better enjoy being the big fish while you can, because high school is a bigger pond.” Students know that they are not going to be in charge for long; the top status position will be lost once they enter high school. As one student put it, “we’re going to have to start all over again...that sucks!”⁶⁵ Awareness of and dissatisfaction with the stratified system is commonly vocalized, especially by the least advantaged. Significant is the change in perspective coinciding with attainment of higher positions; the once underclass now become invested in reproducing the same systemic unappreciated patterns onto “lower” status students.

Social identity, peer cliques as clearly marked status proves highly necessary in this world of differentiation. The phrases: “they just want to belong,” “they are trying to

⁶⁵ Student 8th Grade, female Ms E English Home room

find their place,” must be read literally.⁶⁶ Students inhabit a world governed by explicit roles. If the institution does not tolerate ambiguity, then the student domain will not either. All students enrolled in school are addressed according to explicit student categories-grade level, English language program, calendar track (A,B,C) and school membership (magnet or regular). The institution defends its act of differentiate by stating that each student identity category is allocated the appropriate resources. “We have different kinds of students...Every group needs and gets different things.”⁶⁷ Students understand that resources are allocated differentially. The youth social order also needs clear demarcation of group membership to move, accumulate and or extract resources. In other words, you need to know who to “jack,” “hit up,” or “squash.”⁶⁸ Stratification needs clarity of group identification and differentiation. This society justifies its issues of inequality by assessing respective value worth of each group.

⁶⁶ Phrases voiced by teachers expressing the process of kids searching to fit in to the world of peer group arrangements.

⁶⁷ Mr C, Vice Principal, discussed the different type of students and the school’s corresponding program available for support.

⁶⁸ Words used by students to describe relations of assessment in extraction of resources from other groups or individuals. “To Jack”= to take, “hit up”= to request, ask for or question, “squash”= to minimize, end or stop.

Keyword Inventory: Building Taxonomic List of Identity Categories

The school identified as a microcosm is a fundamental position of this project. The economic (capitalist) and political (state) patterns of rank and stratification must be reflected within the school. Just as in the “real world,” it is our relationships and exchange mechanisms that reveal the concrete outlines of the structures in operation. Early into the research the economic hypothesis and examples of divisions were validated; my only surprise came from finding elevated disconnection, lack of awareness and denial by the actors themselves. It was evident that there was rank at play, yet denied consistently when asked directly. When asked if the *Ballers* were better than the *Skaters*, a student responds: “what do you mean? No one is better here; we’re all the same.” In like manner Ms G. (Art teacher) responds, “The uniforms let the kids know that they’re all the same. They’re all ‘patriots’ here. It’s not like when I went to school where I had to worry about wearing the designer jeans to fit in.”⁶⁹ In another case a student apologized “for being rude” as she returned a survey. I later read her questionnaire form, inquiring about the different groups on campus. She added a counter commentary expressing her displeasure at my project: “I don’t know why you are trying to divide us up?” Her sentiment, expressing a belief I was instigating divisions, was surprising and noted as “difference between what they say and what they do.”⁷⁰ Research observations were accessible but deductively restrictive due to a hesitant vocalization on the part of the participants to reference differential positions and rank. To cope I supplemented the itemized words associated with each group and documented an inventory of resources

⁶⁹ Adams middle school is known as the “home of the patriots”

⁷⁰ Field note entry, “ You can’t rely on asking...make sure to find way to access and support status distinctions....there is a difference in what *they* say and what that *they* do..”

associated with the multiple forms of capital exchanged, accumulated, or produced by the groups. In order to elicit their vocalization of the order of rank I relied on sequencing a systematic model of inquiry with three objectives: 1. Build a definitional list. 2. Compare and contrast terminology to formulate core characteristics traits, expectations. 3. Assess capital types in operation: Economic, Symbolic, Cultural, and Social. The generated list below reflects triangulated assessments to verify consistency in identification and performance of social groupings in order to gain validity

ID List (See table IDL1 for description)

- Nerds, Schoolies, School Boys/
Girls
- Magnets
- Cholos, Gangsters
- Taggers
- Ballers
- Populars, pretty Boys/ Girls, Preps,
socials
- Chunties, *Chuntaros*,
- Mexican-Mexicans
(in contrast to Mexican-
Americans)
- County rushers
- Ghetto
- Wannabees, Posers
- Rockers
- Punks
- Emos
- Jocks, athletes
- Regulars
- Taggers
- White washed, *Los Americanisados*
(the Americanized)
- Free loaders
- Scrubs
- Normals, Regulars
- Wannabees, Poser
s

Table IDL1: Defining the student ID’s

The definitions presented below are student defined and are the responses, the words of the adolescent themselves. They are offered first as emic representations of their vision and logic. Redundant phrases are excluded for sake of brevity. The phrases are provided as students speak of other groups when asked to comment on any and all aspects of defining characteristics-“What does it mean to be a [Nerd]? Who is a [Baller]? How does a [Cholo] dress/ act like? Though students were asked to identify which group(s) they belonged to or identified with, the process of inquiry did not emphasize self definition. Many students consistently found difficulty to mark their specific membership and simply replied that they were “normal” or “hung out with everybody.” The hesitation to claim a group was reminiscent of the pattern of U.S. class recognition where everybody is “middle class.” I accompany each ID section with some theoretic or analytic interpretation to complement the scholastic generated logic.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolies ,Nerds, , School Boys, School Girls: “ kids that do good in school”, “teacher’s like them”, “Not very popular”, “ they get A’s in their classes”, “ dress funny”, “not cool”, “really smart”, “do all their work”, “teacher’s pet” 		
core traits	capital types and value assessments	
Scholastic success, “ smart”, social awkwardness, Female and male membership	[+] Cultural (school success) [+] economic (high degree of access to school resources)	[-] symbolic (not appreciated, un cool) [-] Social (limited intergroup relationships, not well known across social categories)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnets: “smart”, “weird”, “They think their better than us”, “rich”, “nerds”, “schoolies”, “get to go places”, “school boys,” “white washed” 		
core traits	capital types	
<p>Scholastic success, “smart (knowledgeable)”, enrolment in magnet program, material resources</p> <p>Female and male membership</p>	<p>[+] Cultural (academic information)</p> <p>[+] Economic (high degree of access to school resources)</p>	<p>[-] Symbolic capital (not appreciated, “un cool”)</p> <p>[-] Social (limited intergroup relationships, not well known across social categories)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cholos, Gangsters: “thugs”, “are mean”, “belong to gangs”, “are bad”, “write up our walls”, “shave heads”, “mess ups”, “<i>los pelones</i> - baldies”, “dress baggy”, “wear dickies”, “hard”, “get into fights”, “losers” 		
(core traits	capital types	
<p>Gang membership, believed threatening, negative connotation, attire specific (baggy, brand names “dickies”)</p> <p>Female and male membership, but almost exclusively male referenced.</p>	<p>[?] Cultural ()</p> <p>[+] symbolic (“cool”, powerful, “hard”)</p>	<p>[-] Economic (high degree of access to school resources)</p> <p>[-] symbolic(feared, negative perception, forced prestige)</p> <p>[-] Social (limited intergroup relationships, yet well known across social categories)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taggers: “part of a crew”. “vandalize”, “Tag on the walls”, “are not cholos”, “cool”, “wear baggy” 		
(core traits	capital types	
<p>Tagging crew membership, attire specific (baggy), graffiti and art expression</p> <p>Female and male membership but almost exclusively male referenced.</p>	<p>[+] Cultural (artistic)</p> <p>[?] Economic</p> <p>[+] symbolic (“cool” appreciative prestige)</p> <p>[+] Social (multi-group relationships, well known across social categories)</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ballers: “dress nice” , “ are popular” , “get all the girls”, “carry bling”, “ clean*”, “got game*” 		
core traits	capital types	
Attire specific (baggy, brand names “ ecko”, wealth, desirable personality, physical appreciation (Male only?)	[?] Cultural () [+] Economic (material status goods) [+] symbolic (“cool” appreciative prestige) [+] Social (multi-group relationships, well known across social categories)	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pretty Boys/ Girls, (preps & socials) : “ballers”, “ everybody knows them”, “good looking”, “dress well”, “popular” 		
core traits	capital types	
Attire, popularity, physical appreciation Female and male membership	[?] Cultural () [+] Economic (material status goods) [+] symbolic (“cool” appreciative prestige) [+] Social (multi-group relationships, well known across social categories)	[-] Symbolic (conceited, feminine attributes limited to males)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chunties, Chuntaros: “Mexicans”, “wetbacks”, “just got here””, “lame”, “ Mexican-Mexicans* -in contrast to Mexican- Americans”, “real Mexican”, “county rusher” 		
core traits	capital types	
Residency status, ethnic/”racial/ National identifier Female and male membership	[+] Cultural (Spanish language, ethnic traits)	[-] Economic (lack of status goods) [-] symbolic (not appreciated, low prestige) [-] Social (limited multi-group relationships, not well known across social categories)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skaters: “ skate”, “ don’t mess with people”, “ got mad skills”, “always carry their boards” 		
core traits	capital types	
Skill based affiliation Female and male membership, mostly male	[+] Cultural (skating) [+] symbolic (appreciated, prestige)	[?] Economic () [-] Social (limited multi-group relationships, yet well known across social categories)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rockers (Possible interchangeable with punks): “into rock”, “smoke out” 		
core traits	capital types	
Music genre affiliation Female and male membership	[+] Cultural (music, behavior) [?] symbolic (ambiguous appreciation and prestige)	[-] Economic (lack of status goods) [-] Social (limited multi-group relationships, yet well known across social categories)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punks: “ into punk music”, “ don’t take shit”, “losers” 		
core traits	capital types	
Music genre affiliation Female and male membership	[+] Cultural (music)	[-] Economic (lack of status goods) [-] symbolic (low appreciation and prestige but limited reference to respect) [-] Social (limited multi-group relationships, yet well known across social categories)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emos: “loners”, “into emo music”, “tight clothing”, “so gay” “hair covers face”, “they cut themselves”, “got issues”, “emotional”, “losers” 		
core traits	capital types	
Emotional and or psychological frame Female and male membership	[?] Cultural (music, behavior)	[?] Economic (goods) [-] symbolic (low appreciation and prestige but limited reference to respect) [-] Social (limited multi-group relationships, not well known across groups)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White washed, Los Americanizados (the Americanized): “Magnets”, “se creen mucho- they think a lot of themselves/ conceited”, “act white”, “think they’re all white”, “sell outs” 		
core traits	capital types	
Ethnic/ “racial” reference, behavior	[+] Cultural (“standard” English language, behavior mode) [+] Economic (material goods, academic resource access)	[-] symbolic (low appreciation and prestige) [?] Social (cross referenced membership)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrubs: “Newbees”, seventh graders, “county rushers” , “they’re little kids”, “green”, “very immature” 		
core traits	capital types	
Age grade- youngest, grade level, maturity	[+] Cultural (“standard” English language, behavior mode)	[-] Economic (limited academic resource access) [-] symbolic capital- “little kids”, “not cool” [-] Social (limited familiarity and inter actions with other groups)

Defining the Teacher ID's

Students apply and generate identity categories onto teachers as well. The list below is a translated arrangement. Though I did not explicitly survey students; their conversations about the teachers repeated keywords. These keywords became cues as to the categories being applied: “she cool”, “mean”, “old timer”, “down.” Just as the kids fall into identity types, so do the teachers-the angry white lady, the rookie, the down white, the cool brown teachers, the oldies, old timers. The teachers so too became characters and model types which reinforced my research template of school as stage and behavior performances to moves us away from the emphasis on individualism and toward structural analysis.

• (angry)White		
core traits	capital types and value assessments	
“ mean”, “racist”, “ White”, “American”, “old “don’t get it”, “don’t like us”, “ <i>gabacha/o</i> ”	[-] symbolic capital [-] cultural capital	

• (cool) White		
core traits	capital types and value assessments	
“ young”, “cool”, “fun”, “nice”, “Down”	[+] symbolic capital [+] cultural capital	

• Veteranos (veterans)		
core traits	capital types and value assessments	
“old”, “been here forever”, “ know everything”	[+] symbolic capital [+] cultural capital	

• (cool) Brown		
core traits	capital types	
“are like us”, “cool”, “nice”, “ Speak Spanish”, “down”, “one of us”	[+] symbolic capital [+]Cultural capital (high):	

Identity categories and roles

The pattern of labeling informs the respective identity types of specific permissible roles.

There are things that can be said through specific identity contexts only. The “angry white lady” is expected to be mean and say things that are hurtful. The students prepare for, anticipate and even predict certain behaviors and respond with humor, disconnection, or antagonism; but comments offered unexpectedly or out of “character” disrupt the teacher type order and have severe effects. I first noticed this pattern of logic dissonance displayed while observing Ms R’s ESL class. Ms R. is a “Brown,” a bilingual Latino teacher of Puerto Rican ancestry. Students think of him as cool and feel culturally connected-“he’s one of us.”⁷¹ Students in the English as Second Language program take two classes of ESL per day and relay between several instructors. Ms R. and Ms. M. are

⁷¹ “Cool Kid” ,ESL Student, 2006

one such tandem teaching team. A student referred as “cool kid” moved between both teachers. Ms M. is known as an “angry white” teacher type. Ms. M repeatedly verbalized disapproval of the Latino community’s social position. Her most common line was, “when are *you* people [Latinos/ immigrant Latinos] going to get your act together.” “Cool Kid” in Ms. M’s class plays it off with comedy. His response is “When we come out in movies!!”

Mr. R in a moment of frustration, after being told by “cool kid” that his homework was not completed because his family “went out and did not get back until late,” yells: “I’m tired of this! It’s always something with you people. Your people [family] have to get their act together.”⁷² The critique phrase has been heard before, but here it is under a different teacher context, the student appears stunned and “shuts down.” Mr. R does not notice the severity or impact behind his comment. The teaching assistant, aware of the awkwardness of the incident, approaches the “cool kid” and checks by asking, “hey you cool?” The formula of permissible or expected identity performances were repeated many times. I was able to see that the distinct labels carried boundaries dictating what the students not only expect but accept from each teacher type. This pattern becomes a dialectic relationship reifying the purposeful distinction of category types where each item has an explicit role to play. This perspective served to further the conversation of adolescent school identities.

⁷² In follow up conversation Mr. R explained that his reference to “your people” is based on an inside conversation with “cool kid.” Your people refer to a crew or family as the students say, “these are my peeps or people.”

Social Ids (Cliques) As Full Social Microcosm

Students act out relationships that mirror the adult social political issues. This project is about addressing the complexity of peer divisions as acts of intra-ethnic differentiation. The value lies in the examinations of intricate “kinds” of relationships. The different social categories carry different capital types and are also micro versions of adult social, economic, and political performances. Adults live in a world of capital exchanges and thus the children must learn by playing different social identities as part of performing their future roles into what they will inherit. But deterministic reproduction application is cautioned; there is obvious external influence onto the school culture but the output is not a mechanical replica. On the contrary the daily creative interactions sustain this micro-world *not in spite of*, but in cooptation of contradictions and conflicts that would otherwise disrupt its livelihood.

Filling In: If it does not exist, it has to be created.

This analysis deals with interpretive (re)production of the totality of American social life, meaning that if the feeder community does not reflect specific diversity traits, the student body must mimic as best it can. If it does not exist locally, vacant categories must be created and filled. The social groupings as scholastic patterns are about mirroring holistically. Attempts to bind youth social groups as directionally connected to social class supports prove incomplete. Penelope Eckert (1989) uses jocks and burnouts as expressions of middle class versus working class. Paul Willis’ (1978) use of “lads” versus “ear holes” as middle class versus working repeats the mode of class divisions but

confounded with ideological divisions of acceptance and rejection of the school programs. Stanton Salazar (2000) and Angela Valenzuela's (1999) serve as examples of contrasting national/ legal status expressed in academic performance differences in Mexican born versus Mexican American students.

The neighborhood surrounding Adams is highly homogenous; it is composed of a working under class of mostly first generation, immigrant Mexican, and Central Americans. This school does not have children of all the multiple adult social political identities. Students will express categories that are not existent within their immediate community. Examples of stand-in roles are visible in "Ballers" as rich kids, and "Americanized" or "white washed" as a white racial demographic. These identity categories don't exist locally yet are expressed in the interior. They exist in school because they must complete a version of the adult social arrangement.

Other examples are sexuality and class diversity demonstrated in the phrases, "you faggot!" or "they're so ghetto." In my time at Adams, I was surprised by the high degree of homosexual stigma. Young boys jokingly call each other gay to mark dissatisfaction or critique; but they also use it as a social scale. Masculinity is heterosexual. It is difficult to accurately assess homosexuality, but boys considered "feminine" are picked on. The *pretty boys* were sometimes thought of as gay. This became a tactic to disempower and or devalue the capital they otherwise carried. Other times it was violently used to reduce, to hurt other boys. These are kids entering puberty, some pre-puberty and there is no way of openly knowing who is gay, it is hidden; but this school universe expresses homosexuality and it does so exactly in accordance to how it is

manifested in the adult version-negative. A normative conclusion is that this experience must be negative because this is how students learn that homosexuality is “bad” and school is the place to teach this ideology-“if we don’t teach them how to behave, who will?”⁷³

Just as class issues are inescapable outside, within the school walls there too will be an overt economic scale of symbolic and material capital. *Ballers* are representative of social class stratification; they are the rich kids on campus and mark their symbolic position via the types and kinds of relationships with other groups. Who you know is just as significant as who knows you. Ballers are known by most groups, but Ballers rarely know or wish to know low ranking member such as “chunators.” Materially their economic position is clearly defined via the brand name clothing which due to the school’s uniform police is restricted to jackets (Ecko), shoes (Ecko, Nike, Adidas), jewelry (gold chains and diamond earrings) and status technology (iPods, phones). As discussed more fully in chapter 5, uniforms change the expressions but do not eliminate the practice of class evaluations in school. It is necessary to state that Ballers do not represent the children of rich parents. These kids go home to the same community as *chuntos* and *Cholos*. The residency demographic of central LA is an immigrant working underclass.

The most significant example of fulfilling vacant positions is the case of the “White washed” and “*los Americanizados*” the Americanized. These student category types represent two domains: “race” and nationality or nationhood. Racial membership is

⁷³ Teacher O voicing his sense of responsibility toward educating students in line with expectations of adult society.

limited in Adams. Unlike other schools where racial differentiation arranges Whites versus Black or whites versus Brown, here everyone is “Brown.” The few African American students become almost invisible. The students must practice *intra-ethnic differentiation* in order to fulfill racial divisions in order for some students to must become “white.”⁷⁴ The fact that students do not appropriate a Black racial identity to meet the divisional requirement signals that the school operates within the same logic of the national model of race politics. American is *de facto* defined and represented as “White,” not “Black” (Haynes 2006 , Omi & Winnant 2002) .

Unraveling and Inferring Meaning-the labels

The verbalized schema of social characters is a document inferring meaning of the national systems from which it stems. The fragmented mode of divisions performed by an almost exclusive Chicano Latino community (97%) demands alternate analytical filters. This examination is not simply about kids playing the rote role of school cliques, but more so as acts of intra-ethnic differentiation where Chicano Latino students learn to see and make each other as different as part of becoming “Americans.” The social arrangement and perception is a condensed version of an outside world. The scale is reduced thus making the experiences more intense and immediate. As a microcosm, the scholastic context serves as a model schema of intricate categories, divisions and acts of differentiation. It can be argued that these distinct labeled categories represent more

⁷⁴ Intra-ethnic differentiation among Chicano-Latino school youth is defined as an experience of community fragmentation where members express distinct in-group differences that contrast an external appearance of homogeneity and or solidarity (Diaz 2009).

than functional extensions of complex outer education issues, but are themselves pseudo archetypes; seen as projections of a mature sociopolitical collective unconscious-specific to 21st century America- manifested among and performed by adolescents as a process of inheritance (Jung 1953).

The verbalized schema is then a document that we must infer meaning. If institutionalized education is a form of consciously imparting a previous generation's acquired knowledge onto the next, we must then frame "Childhood, however, [as] a state of the past... the child-psyche relives 'the lesson of earlier humanity' as Nietzsche called it..., the world of the men who existed before us" (Henderson 1956, vol. 2:369). We must see the branching paths of today as anchored by very specific roots. Once mature we may change in our awareness of them, but childhood is structured to and by these origins and so I ask: What do the multiple types of characters tell us about the systems which they stem from? How do they pertain to the different levels of operation as attributes of socio political and economic structures and what are the foundational ordering principles?

Students enter a template of identities. These identity categories are built as domains of expectations, boundaries and responsibilities. The critique of school culture is often supported on grounds that it is "made up."⁷⁵ Parents and faculty minimize school occurrences as trivial, but we understand that material consequences reify reality. We call real what we make and perceive as real. The material consequences produce

⁷⁵ A second year teacher voices his frustration as he questions why students continue to "act so ugly toward one another [the negative relationships between the student groups] when it's all made up [reference to the school social group arrangement]."

fundamental differences as observed in contrasting and conflicting identity performances. To call something by a specific name is to essentialize and clearly demarcate, to define its role in the world. The distinct social labels have explicit roles within the school. It is not about superficial names for identical items. Each identity works with one another to teach the participants what is expected of them while in school and ultimately how to live in the U.S.-they must and will assimilate and acculturate.

The first thing students notice upon entering middle school is that there is a “pecking order,” a system of rank. Sixth graders are not as valuable as seventh graders, with the eighth graders holding the most prestigious positions. The differences in age obviously become a factor in why and how one group assesses and values the other. Older students can impose more onto younger pupils; but another key factor is that new students have not had an opportunity to learn and accept the scholastic world. The entering students must be socialized, “schooled” in the order of how this new education phase operates. Unlike elementary school, they now have a heightened compartmentalized educational experience. Teachers and subjects are divided along physical groupings. Bell schedules, subject curriculum and overall scholastic arrangements, makes middle school a “big deal.” The overwhelming experience is recognized and addressed explicitly by teachers and faculty. The more experienced students also play an integral role in easing the transition. All stake holders need maximum participation, all have maximum investment. According to one student, “It was scary at first. You get all these books, the classes are all over the place...You hear all these things that they’re [older students] going to do to you. Jr. high is a big deal...It

takes awhile to get used it you know.”⁷⁶ A teacher supports this sentiment in stating: “We have these little kids. We have to get them ready...How are they going to survive. I know this is scary for them...those poor little ones. But this is nothing compared to high school.”⁷⁷

The School Rules: Understanding Value, Capital And Worth

I entered this project with the hypothesis of rank and stratification as the order of the scholastic social grouping. It is evident that rank and stratification exists but it is not a static structure. The social world of value and capital differentiations is contextual, full of dynamic movements and relationships. The mental diagram shifts from outlines of pyramids and vertical scaffolds to an entangled mesh of pulsing highlights-constantly shifting and flowing from one value location on to another. There is a ranking order to this world but more visible in the extremes of identity compatibility and contrast. Interactions between “Ballers” and “Chuntaros”, “Magnets” and “Cholos” highlight the disparate capital expressions, but elsewhere it becomes harder distinguish unequal exchanges. Divisions between “Rockers,” “Emos,” and “Punks” may be under appreciated by adults, but in the domain of youth are still existent only more intricate than is granted credit. The kaleidoscope of groups must be framed in terms of intimate

⁷⁶ Student 6th Grade male, home room 2006

⁷⁷ Teaching Assistant, female, English class 2006

relationships of exchange. The game these students play and act out gains significance when framed in a materialist lens of class dynamics and capital types in motion. Just as one class exists in support and dependence of another, so too do the different school social groups.

The student social identities are about useful purpose. There is clear identity demarcation in correspondence to resource management in this society which consists of a highly developed political economy. There are rules of what and how resources are produced, distributed and consumed. The governing regulators are both the institution and student collective body. They both compliment and supplement one another. In economic terms, we understand that market exchange systems must be closed platforms for regulation to occur. The exchange of commodities must have boundaries for maximum effectiveness and assurances. Furthermore, the resource types exist as material as well as ideological mechanisms of support. As students enter this school structure, they enter a world established as a state institution which sets basic outlines and templates of identity relationships as well as associated value worth. The organization may configure ideological and activity opportunities that limit the behavior pliability of the participants but students respond creatively to produce a unique culture demonstrating interactions of capital worth manipulation.

Observance of the play ground demonstrates a too often ignored but non-the-less lively market, most visible in examinations of how physical space is used. The playground context operates under clear capital assessments. Students holding more

symbolic capital are able to appropriate advantage over those with less prestige value. For example, students in the magnet program, “the magnets” internalize the material resources such as books, computers and trips which accompany their respect category and perform their perceived higher symbolic capital in rank themselves superior to the “Regulars,” “Chuntaros” and “Cholos.” In a hall way conversation between a group of girls, I over hear: “...that’s cus were magnets.” I pretend to wait outside a classroom in order to grasp the full conversation. Another girl continues: “they just hate... they’re jealous of us. We are going places and they’re not. Come on! They’re losers... they can’t even speak right.” The peer group attempts to comfort a particular distressed individual by accessing the scholastic social division categories. From the context of the conversation there appears to have been an altercation where a distinguishing characteristic is a divide in the academic program. The school applies cultural and economic capital differences to each peer group which the girls in turn use to exchange and convert for their own use.

It is important to note that the Regulars have ways of equalizing the magnets’ sense of superiority. The circulated labels are indicators of currency. Words such as Nerds, Geeks, or simply lame, reduces the magnet’s higher status position. “Magnet” membership grants students greater institutional attention but does not assure peer appreciation. Adolescent capital arrangements may stem from relationships with the school, but creativity is not limited to strict “directed” performances; groups find ways to manipulate capital. Less prestigious status is not without alternative recourse. An example of capital manipulation is evident in Cholos converting their reduced economic

and social capital via access exchanges to increase degrees of symbolic value in order to “check” the Magnets and Populars. One student states: “yea man, it gets old, really old... these fools [Magnets, Ballers and Popular] walk around thinking they’re all that... So they ask for it. They have to be checked [equalized] and put in their place.”⁷⁸ The Populars or Ballers appear as one of the most highly ranked social cliques within the school because they carry high prestige value, but the top tier identity does not imply complete privilege. The differing versions of symbolic power limit authority access against a Cholo identity. The Cholo category carries a distinctive form of capital. Cholos’ defining association with gangs leads the playground to voice an unappreciative form of symbolic capital: intimidation, fear, and violence. Students in large shirts, baggy pants and shaved heads walk the halls with a defiant sense of pride. There is cool factor to being seen as “hard;” but the cool factor is inverse to that expressed onto the “Ballers,” and “Pretty boys,” which also strut through the playground in similar confident esteem. The social stigma of gang participation proves advantageous when converted to an alternate form of prestige status. Cholos understand that fear is a very strong advantage and use it well.

The quad is a central place where the multiple social cliques meet. The uniforms create a sea of white and navy blue that adds a degree of “messiness” to the student body’s movement, masking a choreographed divide regulated by social identity designation. Absent of other resources, location and control over space becomes a valuable marker for all groups. The quad is mostly unattractive concrete and monitor

⁷⁸ Male 8th grade from “cholo” category explains “checking.” Checking here implies a reference to assess and evaluate oneself. Checking puts people perceived to think of themselves as superiors back toward normalcy. This is a reductive process.

vigorously. The areas around the buildings are traffic area only; students cannot “hang out.” There is a rose garden with small a lawn which is off limits to all. Mr C, the Assistant principal explains: “There is plenty of room for the students to unwind. They can stay here [central quad] or go over there [to the Physical Education yard. We just don’t like them hanging out behind the buildings. It makes it harder for us [adults] to keep an eye on them. We like to see them here, to make things less messy” Amidst the view of adults, adolescents enjoy down time for “kids to be kids” and socialize not simply as groups of friends but more so as friends within social category divides. The clusters of peer group divisions claim ownership of parts of the yard. “The ESL kids go to the PE yard or hang out by the county [outside eating benches] area, the Magents are right over there [by the counselor’s bungalow], the Ballers and Cholos cruise around.”⁷⁹

The layout is segmented but not fixed. The order of recreational space can and is altered anytime a more prestige imbued group wishes to displace a lesser group. From a distance I witnessed the popular crowd without conflict, push “Chuntaros” out of a bench area. There is no conversation, no request, but simply an understanding of the pecking order; the Populars approach Chuntaros and the newcomers move away. The same popular group will not attempt a similar encroachment on Cholos. If anything Cholos out rank the Ballers on the playground. Populars/ Ballers and Cholos both hold high symbolic capita, but one is determined by perceived access to wealth and the other to alleged physical force.

⁷⁹ 8th grade male form “skater” group explain the playground layout.

Summary

All social research is admittedly limited in scope and application, I acknowledge that my focus on intra-ethnic differentiation as part of scholastic social identities does not encompass all possible totality and complexity of schooling, but is one more theoretical tool. The focus on school reform and intervention must add a new element. Asking “why Schools fail students” will not lead full answers until adolescent and parent culture is equally factored. Critical education research and change requires inclusion of neighborhoods, streets in collaboration of lunchrooms, hallways and play yards. The demographic profile for this south Central Los Angeles challenges the assumptive rubrics of schools as centers of heterogeneous ethnic, class and social stratification encounters. The model of schools as sites where heterogeneity meets does not apply fully at Adams. The middle school is placed within an urban ecology. The community surrounding the school as a majority Chicano Latino represents racial/ethnic segregation as part of the State’s political economic arrangement. In a context of marginalization and as part of the institutionalized process of schooling, students learn to differentiate. The folk taxonomy reveals intra-ethnic differentiation as social cliques approximate and mimic a full American spectrum of society’s divisions. Chicano Latino students perform an arrangement that requires them to fill-in roles and divisions that are not locally available. Students are schooled in the acts of making difference. They learn to see each other as carrying different levels of worth; not as a social hitch but as part of a normative socialization as future Americans.

Chapter4: DIFFERENT SCHOLASTIC EXPERIENCES (Two Versions, One Group, One School)

At the core of this research is the identification of adolescent Chicano Latino ethnic and social constructs as part of a school context. The product of this project is the construction of a folk taxonomy of the school culture as relevant to built identities with prime attention to explaining how students perceive, rationalize and organize cultural, social, economic and national diversity. The desegregation of social identities as emically defined folk taxonomies become significant when referenced to the distinct identity categories as they become reified by their differential meanings on the lives of individuals. Students learn to see themselves as kinds. The pursuit of identity categories is achieved in the unraveling of attributes, boundaries and terms as parts and kinds of relationships. In studying folk taxonomies, terms are powerful indicators as principles of inclusion and exclusion as well as a way of ordering events and objects in specific environments (Spradley, 1970). Words, terms, labels, “identify; they tell us both about what they name and what we know concerning what they name” (Garcia, 2000: 1). In this context, language is highlighted as a methodological strategy because it is a vital “repository which holds the key to our understanding...of culture” (Spradley, 1970:131). The linguistic recording of terms as identity labels initiated as an operationally explicit methodology proves fruitful in clarifying how the scholastic community orders their world. The students speak for themselves.

The analysis of “terminological systems” as “conceptual principles” rooted within a school context validates my working hypothesis; students express much greater

diversity and differentiation than the school as a bureaucratic institution (Frake, 1962:74).

The classification system used by the school is officially structured by demographic details inclusive of ethnicity, “race”, nationality, gender, income, language and local residency. This is an official conceptual schema of necessary markers of information.

The overall experience of students is directly dependent on the variety of applicable distinctions in official and unofficial category sets. The spectrum of identity domains is perceived as pre-established and the students have only but a choice of how to navigate the arrangement; sparking a conversations of structure versus individual agency.

School Labels Not Value Neutral

The taxonomic list, the social clique labels as inventory of the ways students divide themselves must be understood as imbedded in differential power relations. Some verbal markers carry greater significance than others. The act of naming implies material consequences but not always as expected. Racial and gender identifications are significant domains of social ordering in our adult society, but in Adams these terms do not necessarily imply bureaucratic use differences. A female, African American, English speaker is treated officially identical to a male Latino, English speaker. Their class schedule and academic exposure is unaffected. Class as income on the other hand becomes important as useful information within the school.

Class

Students with parents at or below a specific poverty level are eligible for federal support.⁸⁰ Students qualify for the national free or reduced lunch program meal tickets (i.e. lunch vouchers). With an average yearly income of 23,917 dollars, almost everyone qualifies for this assistance program. The low social economic demographics also place Adams as a *Title I* school; meaning that it receives federal funds to supplement libraries, curriculum enhancement, research and training within the guise of “improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged”.⁸¹

Students appear unaware of the school’s position and the consequent programs available to them. For the most part they do not use the shared socioeconomic position, except in their recognition of the lunch program. Students refer to this program as “county” and its recipients as “county rushers.” This pattern of naming is addressed more fully in a consequent section, but it begins our discussion of the dual demographic applications; one by the official school structure and one by the student population. There are two bodies that officiate.

Nationality and Racialization of Latinos

Nationality is another recorded social domain, but officially it does not make much of a difference on the scholastic lives of students. The teachers and institution cannot

⁸⁰ For the period July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009, 130 percent of the poverty level is \$27,560 for a family of four; 185 percent is \$39,220. Data gathered from United States Department of Agriculture, Food and nutrition services web site <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/>

⁸¹ Title I — Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged, the act was passed in 1965 as a federal measure to assure and assist the children of poor families meet education party with the more economically supported.

anything with this classification. It is only for statistic purposes. The student population also minimizes the use of national ties. To say a student is from Guatemala, Mexico, or El Salvador is of little relevance. Distinctions between Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico as meaningful national identities are reduced in significance when replaced by a Latino and or Hispanic reference. Students mimic the national aggregative phenomenon as they minimize specific national ties in place for generic Latino identification. The student community is aware of geography differences but as one student voiced it, “we’re all Latinos here, we’re all brown.”⁸²

The student aggregation to a Latino or “Brown” category is significant in that it mirrors the pattern of pan-ethnicity as diversity consolidation at the national scale. The use of Latino and Hispanic terminology is fairly recent; it has been in effect for over thirty years. As part of U.S. bureaucratic and social arrangements, populations from diverse and disassociated backgrounds now operate as a unified definitional unit-Latino or Hispanic. The national erasure and transformation is guided by the U.S. racial arrangement that cannot incorporate individualized diversity, but must accept groups as blocks that fit within the segmented political and economic arrangement. The ideology of “race” believes in a limited set of distinct groups-White, Black, Asian, and Native

⁸² Field notes: (Male student 9th grade, 2006). Student discusses his collection of friends. “I have friends from all over...Mario is from Guatemala, Johnny is from El Salvador and I’m Mexican...But we’re all Latinos, we’re all brown”.

American. Latinos represent an ambiguous group, a group at the cross roads between hyper and hypo-descent.

The Mexican community carries an extensive history of challenging racial definitions. Before being labeled Latino, *Mexicanos* in California often shifted between Indian and White classification. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is the first instance of legal hypo descent alignments as the recently acquired population is moved into White as *dejure* classification (Lopez, 1996). In practice the Mexican community experiences great difficulty accessing a complete “white” identity as legally performed. The vision of this community as non-white will limit its political, economic, and educational opportunities. As application of racial discourse in material arrangements, is the segregation of children in schools. Federal law permitted segregation of Japanese, Chinese and Indian children due to their non-white status, but many schools often found it difficult to accurately apply education restrictions to Mexican children (Menchaca, 1995:75). In 1935 California Law as education legislature defines Mexican children as Indian and thus unifies schooling restrictions (Lopez, 1996). Mexican-Americans are later redefined as non-Indian in the 1946 *Mendez et al v. Westminster School District of Orange County* and consequently ineligible for racial segregation (Spring 1997:104). It is not until the 1954 decision of *Brown v Board of Education* that legal segregation banned nationwide.

Situated within the above historic context, the term “Brown” manifests reference as an expression of racialization/raciation. The students reflect the socialization of

reifying race discourse. Latino is more accurately understood as an ethnic identifier but is commonly reconfigured into pseudo-race. The US census attempts to address the ambiguous racial arrangement by asking people to reference Hispanic as not Black or White. Students adopt the race model and insert themselves as Brown. When asked to explain what it means to be “Brown”, a student responds: “We’re in the middle. You have Black people, White people and then us.”⁸³ “Race” is a marker of differentiation informing the participants of their expected position as part of an explicit social arrangement of unequal exchange relationships. “White” is the normative marker, the status quo. “Black” is the contrast referent that signals social marginality. Students see themselves as bridging an in-between position as an approximation to the dominant core status. The mythic racial classification separates groups into two major dichotomous blocks; white versus nonwhites-i.e. people of color.

Language and Residency Status

Language and residency status are important markers of institutional differentiation. Latino Spanish speakers (as recent immigrants) experience contrasting processes of schooling when compared with US born English speaking Chicana/o Latinos. Students registered using English as their home language are placed in the English only, standard curriculum. Those marked as primary Spanish speakers are placed in the ESL classes and modified curriculum plan. The modified curriculum plan means students do not

⁸³ Field notes: male student from Ms E, English class provides his insight of the racial groupings in the US.

receive elective courses such as art, music, computers and science and instead take double English classes. It is only until students officially transition full English can they start taking their elective course. The limited access to instruction is paramount to a tracking instrument altering the potential educational outcome of English learners. As *de facto* rule, the full education curriculum is open to English speakers only. The language curriculum division is the mechanism by which the institution actively creates intra-ethnic differentiation. The material experience of grouped membership creates two contrasting Chicana/o Latino versions. Students see each other as different in part because the school treats them as different. “We have different types [of students] here... there’s us [English speakers] and the Spanish speakers...they have their classes and got ours.”⁸⁴

Though not officially registered, residency as legal status is also implied in language expression. Documentation of legal status is not a requirement for school attendance. There have been multiple efforts to restrict services such as proposition 187, but schools can’t ask nor deny students based on legal residency. Legal status then stands as an unregistered identity within the bureaucratic record. The reality is that residency status is very much registered by both official and unofficial bodies. On the first day of an ESL class (English as Second Language) the teacher shares her awareness of the questionable legal residency of her students. “We can tell who’s new [to the county]. I

⁸⁴ Field notes: 8th grader, Male student commenting on the different groups on campus. Student was mainstream English participant in group discussion on the school group diversity. His comments point out awareness of correlation between the classes available for the differing language groups.

mean... come on, how can a 12 year old not know a basic question, like what's your name? But hey, that's not what I'm paid to do [check/enforce immigration laws].”⁸⁵

It is apparent that there is an official and unofficial demographic schema in practice at the institutional level as manifested by the title holders, teachers, administrative and support staff. On the one hand, the school consciously regulates the appropriate use of demographic details they collect. Identity categories of “race”, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and residency are not intended for application of differential experience on to students. Contrary to intent, the reality is that the classifying details become very much tools of differentiation. Differentiation as a model explicitly contrasts diversity in the emphasis on purpose and consequence. Diversity serves as the recognition of difference with little if any consequence. Differentiation must be defined as the explicit manufacture or emphasis of perceived differences with implicit consequences and justifications as impulse and or execution of differential treatment, distribution and or access to resources, prestige and or power. Differentiation as a process becomes applicable to a Latino social category both as a quasi racial maker and confounded with associated skepticism of legal residency status: “It’s rough being Latino, we do all the hard work and we get shit on. But I guess it could be worse. You know? Being brown is one thing, but being brown and illegal is another. They have it worse.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Field notes: Ms M., ESL teacher 2006

⁸⁶ 8th grade male student explains why he participated in the school walk outs and immigrant marches of 2006. We all walked because it’s important. The way I see it, it’s rough being Latino. We do all the hard work and we get shit on. But I guess it could be worse. You know? Being brown is one thing, but being brown and illegal is another. They have it worse. That’s why we have to stick to together, you know?”

The Lived Identity Model and Double Vision

Mapping the school social arrangement requires framing two interrelated spheres. My working hypothesis presupposed a disaccord between the institution's categorization of Chicano Latino ethnic identity diversity and the "lived identity" playground experience of intra-ethnic differentiation—a disconnection between an official versus unofficial taxonomy of scholastic identity diversity. Unexpected is the relationship of collaboration and dependence between the two scholastic spaces. The students' versus the institution's formulation of diversity and differentiation is not completely disparate. Students do arrange a larger inventory than the school but there are overlapping groups (see chapter 3 for list the folk taxonomy of identity categories). The relationships of disaccord and conflicts between the two domains of the school experience are structured along frames of recognition, visibility and legitimate applicable use of identification.

In order to ground this work, I relied on an operational model consisting of three elements to successful taxonomic identification: First, assessment of valid social identities begins by assuring that labels are recognized. There must be an overt acknowledgment of the group's presence and existence in the school context. Identity awareness is in direct relationship to visibility. Secondly, each group must be noted as visibly and distinctly different from another through specific actions and attributes. The anticipated clothing expressions of group membership were complicated by the use of uniforms; but surprisingly, uniforms were appropriated as dividing technique in order to mark identity, not by what you wear but how you wear the uniform-attire modification. The third and most necessary component is action oriented, applicable use of

differentiation. What do people do with the classifications? There must be a meaningful consequence to identifying one item as different from another.

The consequences of identification produce a “lived identity” model. This experiential model of identity is cognizant of a limited number of social positions of which everyone is required to find their place. Participants are defined by an extensive collection of personal information and definitional experiences but the scholastic platform as an explicit context can only use some information. The folk taxonomy does not change daily, nor does it populate infinite categories. Clarity of identification is mandatory. Ambiguity and lack of commitment to the respective “cliques” is problematic and thus not tolerated. This framework places prime emphasis in the types, kinds and material outcomes of relationships. The details of interactions as relationships teach and reinforce not only the identity domains in operation but also the rules. No one fits neatly into the arrangement but few challenge the divisions. The social categories are accepted and reproduced.

Within this context, the recent immigrant identity surfaces as a highlighted group because of its unique experience of double recognition, visibility, and applicable use of differentiation. Chicanos, Mexican-Americans and Wet backs are applied all three elements by both the school and student population with equal severity. The school sees recent immigrants and processes them through the institution within predetermined guidelines as explicitly correlated to their limited English proficiency. Schools are legally mandated to provide equal access to education to every child and officially

acknowledge this student type in order to make room for them in English as Second Language instruction and modified curriculum courses. As a minor note, the only other scholastic social identities to operate under the same legal requirement are special education (cognitive or emotional) and student disability (vision, auditory, physical impairments).

As stated above, the playground culture also takes inventory of the demographic diversity within the school. The playground population catalogs and labels to assure each respective identity is properly incorporated into its proper place; it is the same procedure and agenda as the official matriculations conducted for school registration. Using the model of recognition, visibility and legitimate applicable use, we see that students also take record of the English Learners. In the adolescent controlled world, the entering bodies are relabeled the *recien llegados* (newly arrived), the *chuntaros* (undesirable poor, rift raft), the wetbacks, and the Mexican-Mexicans (contrast to Mexican –American). It is clear that each social category has specific relational roles and responsibilities set in a school plane. All identities are diligently recorded and manifested via their lived identity experiences.

The compound effect of recognition, visibility and application onto the recent immigrant group marks this identity as key example demonstrating the phenomenon of schooling difference. All students are socialized into the scholastics divisions but recent immigrants as uber outsiders, experience dual programs of socialization. As outsiders they are applicable to a transitional incorporative program. The school places newcomers

into an English Learner curriculum while they transition to English fluency and the student culture applies its own version of transitional instruction, they too will “school” the newcomers.

There is an evident distinction between U.S. born versus non-U.S. born Latinos (recent immigrants). There are two programs of expectations and processes shaping alternate school experiences. The portfolio of identity membership is intra-ethnically subdivided. Recent immigrants unpack a set of associated stereotypes imbued with positive and negative attributes. Some teachers view recent immigrants as more respectful, submissive and better students; others are frustrated by the “burden” of immigrants and execute a distinctive negative, almost punishing schooling program.

In addition the U.S. born Latino position is used by some teachers to express default traits-disrespectful, lazy, and ungrateful-as “Americanized” versions of their non U.S. born counterparts. Similar patterns have been observed in border towns such as El Paso Texas and San Diego, where contrasting identity arrangements play one ethnic group against another (Stanton-Salazar, 2001;Valenzuela, 2003). English speaking students are usually compared to recent immigrants. Teachers voice a surprise by the outperformance of recent immigrant children over their U.S. counterparts. In an ESL class, Mr. O discusses his recent immigrant student reading better than his U.S. born counterparts. “She’s only two...been here two years and she ‘out reads’ these [U.S. born], it’s embarrassing. They should be embarrassed...I just don’t get it...Sometimes I

bring her up to read just so they can see [how better she is], maybe it'll motivate them."⁸⁷

Mr. O has both U.S. and non U.S. born students in the same ESL class which raises the question of the mixed class. There are significant numbers of US born students that are placed in ESL classes. Their literacy performances in "regular" English are below basic and thus are placed in ESL curriculum-a point of intersection for an otherwise divided group.

Schooling and Mainstreaming: Assimilation only for one

Recent immigrant students experience two school programs operating under similar objective paradigms of "schooling." Both groups intend to assimilate the newcomers, as a process of full incorporation into a host group; unfortunately only one will achieve complete assimilation. The instructional program cannot assimilate English Learners (the newcomers) into their intended American population. There is an incomplete vision and understanding of identity differentiation. The school assumes that once students are "English only," caretaking is complete. There is no longer an official need to support the newcomer students in accordance of a specific social identity category in such terms as ethnic, residency or linguistic classification; for all practical purposes, mainstreamed individuals are identity adjective neutral.

Assimilation into American society is the ultimate goal of the school. The foundations of public education clearly frame the purpose for institutional education as a

⁸⁷ Field notes: Mr. O. 2006.

method for socialization and national incorporation of its citizenry (Proefriedt, 2008).

Unfortunately American absorption as an ideal is not realistic given the pattern of race discourse as tied operators of social incorporation.

U.S. assimilation is often confused as a process, but it must be acknowledged as an end point resulting in American national identity. American nationalism stands on a prerequisite of out-group acceptance. The host must incorporate the “foreign” element fully. This inclusion is dependent on erasure of traits of differentiation. Invisibility is part of full member incorporation. This process of addition from outsider to insider is group oriented. Individuality is temporarily forsaken in order for new group transition and final identification.

Contrasting assimilation is acculturation. Acculturation as modeled by Raymond H. C. Teske, Jr. and Bardin H. Nelson (1974) is understood of a process of cultural transformation. This model emphasizes acculturation as a process. The end point is not as significant as the multiple conditions for individual and group accommodations into a dominant culture format. Cultural diffusion is channeled via power relations. Relationships of dominant-subdominant “determine the direction and degree” of cultural change (Teske and Nelson, 1974: 351). Cultural incorporation is transformative, but not erosive. Perpetual differentiation as a host applied factor illustrates the incomplete nature of incorporation and a key marker between assimilation and acculturation.

The differing models of cultural change and U.S. incorporation (i.e. assimilation versus acculturation) signal that acculturation of newcomer students is the extent of what

is possible for the formal instructors. The restriction lies in the mechanisms of identity operators at the national scale. National assimilation is predicated on erasure of differentiation of specific non-dominant identity domains of stigma such as “race,” class, and gender.

The program of transition and incorporation into unsupported school standards is known as mainstreaming. The institution’s official goal is to “mainstream” the newly arrived as English learners into the English only curriculum quickly and thus grant them access to the school’s full state standards agenda. The recent immigrants must become “regular” students in order to fully enter the stream of American education. This is expressed best in a conversation with Mr. T, the bilingual coordinator: “Our job is to get these kids up and running as fast as possible. We have to make sure we get them in with the regular [English only] kids.”⁸⁸

Mainstreaming addresses acculturation and assimilation and must be framed as a subtractive process; it is a process of erasure where deculturalization is key (Spring, 1997; Valenzuela, 2003). To be mainstreamed is to approximate hegemonic power dominant American templates. Students of the state’s educational institution are privy to a systematic socialization program fulfilling the national, social, economic, and political agenda. Students must exit as patriotic, English speaking, class conscious, economically

⁸⁸Field Notes: Mr. S, bilingual coordinator speaks on the objective of the bilingual education program. He points out that the language program is not intended to support two languages as the name implies. The bilingual program used in LAUSD holds an objective of transitioning students in to full English access.

productive citizens (Rippberger and Staudt, 2003). The final outcome must fit unnoticed and fully compatible to American society.

Unlike the school institution, the student population will more successfully prepare the *recien llegados*, the newly arrived for full integration into their respective host population. The student body will push and pressure the newcomers to change. They will assist this group to blend-in and transition to the point where the playground society will not be able to differentiate them as outsiders; they will mainstream to fit unnoticed-no longer outsiders-into their student society. It is clear the playground culture also “mainstreams”, but in contrast to institution goals; here students address intra-ethnic differentiation. Students do not neglect ethnicity. They live in a society that does not allow them to pretend to be ethnically neutral. Within the context of ethnic differentiation, the playground process of mainstreaming is more successful in transitioning and incorporating participants into a host. The student body’s goal also is to transition participants into American society, but while still maintaining ethnic reference in the forefront. The adolescent program references diversity as part of political and cultural elements and thus appears to represent a more realistic and accurate understanding of ethnic structural configurations in the United States.

County Rushers, Chuntaros and the Mexican-Mexicans: A case study of two programs

The observation details of this research experience were difficult to prioritize; there was so much to document-it was overwhelming. With time things cleared up and two distinct

programs in operation emerged. Students navigate the infrastructure of school as expressed in curriculum, rules, teachers and buildings; but they also move through the cultural expression held primarily by a student body. Every student social identity unpacks a different school version by the respective programs available. The chuntaro group demonstrates the multiple processes so overtly; it serves well as case study to outline the mechanics of “schooling.” The school offers different education versions correspondent to the specific social category attending. What follows is the experience of Chuntaros in Adams. Comments such as, “everyone babies them,” “cuddles them,” “we bend over backwards,” and “they have it good” express a prevailing belief that the school caters to their needs too much.”⁸⁹ The belief that there is too much accommodation for the immigrant students is predictable but questionable when compared to the applicable school design and actual experience.

The scholastic social inventory list is diverse and always changing in corresponding to the tide of the adult world. Groups enter and leave, others are simply relabeled; change is constant. Peer group membership is a “normal” part of the school experience; but whereas, the “Nerds”, “Pretty boys” and “Cholos” persist as social fixtures, “chuntaro” membership is explicitly accepted only under conditional and temporary terms. Recent immigrants are not only expected to transition out of this status but permanency equates failure. “The objective is getting them out of ESL... We start with English level 1, this kid has no English and we should be able to get them to level 6.

⁸⁹ Teachers, students and staff comment on a belief that the school focuses more attentions on recent immigrant, chuntaro students than other students.

At level 6, they speak read and write English proficiently...they no longer need support...It doesn't always work out that way but that's the point of the program."⁹⁰ The group may remain but individuals cannot stay.

Chuntaros are accepted into the scholastic arrangement but all stake holders make it clear that the recent immigrants are temporary. This liminal position is unique. "Populars," "Nerds," "Skaters," and "Cholos" are recognized as legitimate participants of the school social world. Not all peer group cliques are appreciated-i.e. Cholos, but there exists a logic informing everyone it is "normal" for them to exist as part of this scholastic social world.⁹¹ The element of impermanency is significant. Both official and unofficial programs are equally invested in moving individuals out of this group position. The newcomers are seen as a disruption, an inconvenient adjustment to an otherwise bound and unproblematic working order. This sentiment is familiar to the macro debates (all the emotive screaming) in education regarding "bilingual education" and immigration.⁹² The idea of "Mexican outsiders" (though inaccurate), is a legitimate story repeated within the school-as the ideological base directing the performances. Acceptance appears unaffected by recognizing a Spanish speaking presence as predated to the U.S. founding; Some voice narrative shifts to accept [Mexican-Mexicans, English learners,] as integral

⁹⁰ Mr. T, bilingual coordinator reviews the English language levels.

⁹¹ There is an open disdain and rejection for Cholos but their existence is not questioned as outside the domain of American school culture.

⁹² The term bilingual education is used loosely. There is difference between English as second Language instruction and dual language programs. Most conversations use the terms bilingual education to reference

participants of the school arrangement-“the border crossed [them], [they] are from here.”⁹³

The applied hypothesis that each identity category is connected to a set of associated opportunities, limitations, expectations and responsibilities is validated; Chuntaros are injected with all the burdened politics of immigrant status. Recent immigrant students experience the punishment of the adult world. They are not the instigators of actions leading them to this situation-adults make the decisions-but the abstract debates and discourse fall up on the bodies of children. There is a peculiar relationship between the child and adult version of immigration experiences. As new comers, children are seen as possessing appreciated traits such as polite, hard working, and submissive people. Though they are granted lenience-“not their fault...poor lil things...their parent chose to come here”-they will vouch for and accept the role of bearers of the frustrations of their adult counterparts, the parents.⁹⁴

There is a stark difference between child and adult entry experiences. Adult immigrants are mostly shielded from institutional schooling as forms of punishment. Their work detail insulates and extracts labor with limited contact with a hostile community. The parents mainly work in the garment industry and undocumented service industry, sites where their lived commodity identities cordially structure dominate-

⁹³ Mr A, Parent and volunteer coordinator, speaks of his frustration of being seen as an introduction to the area. “*Nosotros somos de aqui, ellos son los que vinieron para California. A nosotros nos cruzo la frontera...Nuestros niños son de aqui.*” (We are from here, they are the ones that came to California...The border crossed us...Our kids are from here.)

⁹⁴ Mr C. Math teacher discusses his belief that it is not fair to blame children for the choices of parents to immigrate. (February 1, 2005)

subordinate interactions. The adults return to segregated yet relatively safe enclaves of their peers. When they enter school, via after school adult English classes, the experience is encouraging, welcoming, and safe. The parents' version of schooling makes it difficult for them to relate to that of their children. Parents attend Adams as a school structure catering solely to their needs; there is no other alternate peer group to encounter and compete with. The only curriculum available is ESL and citizenship classes. "*Todos estamos aquí por la misma razón, todos queremos aprender y superarnos.* (Everyone is here for the same reason, we all want to learn [English] and advance)." There is a shared and unified sense of support to adult school attendance, where everyone is in the same status position.

Encouragement, appreciative reception and safety do not apply to immigrant children. Recent arrivals navigate a scholastic world where they are daily reprimanded for being the outsiders; even within a community of 97.3% Chicana/o Latino students. The school is a crucial site where all the abstract ideologies and politics manifest concretely. It has to be here that everything that society needs will be funneled and reproduced, nothing is excluded. The role and responsibility of ideological management is executed through bureaucratic channels. Instruction is purposeful but also unofficial. Framers of public education intended instruction to confirm and change participants to align with the agreeable social mores in operation. This objective must be taught holistically, without exclusion of positive and negative performances. The executioners will not necessarily know their cast roles until performed for an audience who with interpret actions as textual. The lessons inform the audience of the intended message.

The U.S. born Chicana/o Latino (Mexican-Americans, *Los Americanisados*) students will help transition the non U.S. born Chicana/o Latino (Mexican-Mexicans, Chuntaros) students to their appropriate position within racialized national arrangements- some may enter but as alternate American versions. Students see themselves as Americans, but modeled as Mexican-Americans or simply Latinos. These young citizens are very much aware of the significance and necessity of ethnic and pseudo-racialized hyphens: “My mom always told me I was Mexican. I guess I’m Mexican-American.”⁹⁵

The student body will mainstream recent immigrant students as fully assimilated Adams middle school adolescents, something not possible for the institution’s case. The Chuntaro identity will move from the social margins towards the core, transforming until eventually becoming an insider by erasing all marked newcomer traits at which point they will have integrated completely. On the other hand, the schools objective cannot be realized. Full integration into becoming an American requires an erasure of initial outsider marked identity. If the barrier is marked on the body, these students cannot simply be Americans.

American as a national identity is understood as all inclusive, permissible under the process of socialization and shifts in allegiance. If these students do their part to learn, change and fit then they will be accepted. A critique of this ideology is that it masks reality. Identification as American excludes more than it includes-as supported via access to the history of nation building. National history demonstrates American identity

⁹⁵ Field notes: Female 8th grade, Magnet student responding to a question of what it means to be American.

in line with a specific template: white, male, wealthy, heterosexual, and Judeo-Christian. These specific students have a difficulty fully meeting such template. The educational characterization as aligned to national traits demands a culture filter addressing social clique arrangements as expressions of a 97 % Chicano Latino community. Some will match up more closely to the model than others. Those few that approximate the criteria will be more successful. Within the racialized application of the Chicano Latino identity, the opportunities for this process are highly limited.

Charles Dickens in South Central

In preparation for a December winter season (holiday) performance, a group of students from the magnet program work with another group from an ESL class. This is part of “mixing”-an instruction technique where students from different English levels interact. The students rehearse the play “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens. It is 5th period. Some students sit in the auditorium seats finishing what appears to be a writing assignment, while others are on stage walking through staging of the scene. Ms O (“cool” magnet teacher) watches off stage as Ms X directs. Ms X and Ms O are both white females in their mid 20’s. Ms. O turns and whispers, “I’ll leave this to the pros.” Ms X appears to have theater training. She takes the responsibility seriously. The students giggle and play around as they are directed from one place to another. Ms X struggles to coordinate the group. She stops for a moment to give a pep talk where tells the kids to “take it seriously...this is [their] chance to do good work ...nobody wants to look bad.” The lead characters are shy and can’t remember their lines. Students

auditioned for their parts by reading through the script. Those students most fluent in English were chosen. The magnet students are lead actors and ESL students are secondary and background cast. All students are Chicana/o Latino.

From auditorium:

Ms. X sets the scene for the students: “Remember this is 19th century England, it’s cold, it’s Christmas. They used to speak English differently back then. Make sure to ‘enunciate!’”

Female Student M1- reads through her parts. She is the narrator and is having difficulty with the wording.

M1 (Narrator): Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail. Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge and Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Male Student M2 (Fred, Scrooges nephew):“A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!”

Male Student M3 (Scrooge): “Bah! Humbug!”

Student M2: “Christmas a humbug, uncle!” “You don't mean that, (unnoticeable pause for comma) I am sure?”

Teacher Ms. X: No! The comma is there for a reason. There are two separate phrases in that line. Pause after “that,” otherwise you change the meaning.

Student M 2: (Confused, student turns to friend off stage and asks, in Spanish): *hey guey, que no lo dije asi?* - hey [fool], didn't I say it like that? (Student M2 then returns to teacher and says): I thought I did.

Teacher Ms X: (visibly frustrated) ok let's keep moving. You [student M3] do your line.

Student M3: “I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.”

Student M2: “Come, then,” “What right has you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose (student pronounces as morse)? You're rich enough.” (Pauses and asks) Miss... what's dismal again?

Teacher Ms X: Dismal means gloomy...dark... And morose is to be sad... don't forget, it has two syllables, there's a second “o”, its “Mor-ose.” Ok, moving on!

Student M3: “Bah! Humbug.”

Student M2: “Don't be cross, uncle!” (Student pauses and makes a questionable face) Miss... Why does he say ‘don't be cross?’

Teacher Ms O: (Moves to foot of Ms. X while still off stage) Maybe we should change the lines around... make it easier for... You know, update the language?

Teacher Ms. X: C'mon! Oh No!!...that would be sacrilegious... this is Dickens, this is a classic. These kids will get it.

Meaning

Over the course of the week I returned to the auditorium to check on the progress. The cast of students changed as “better” (English speaking) actors were given parts. The female narrator remained the same. The students worked from simply standing in place to stage setting and finally dress rehearsal. There was much progress displayed. The students showed seriousness and investment in their performance. In reference to Ms X's lecture, “nobody wanted to look bad.” Ms. X kept her word and did not change the dialogue to accommodate the students, but she did shorten scenes. The holiday performance was successful. Most everyone remembered their lines and hit “their

marks.” Parents and teachers were proud. Students were indifferent, more amused by funny hats and costumes (top hats, 19th century English attire), than anything else.

Charles Dickens’, *A Christmas Carol* is as Ms X stated “a classic.” This play conveys the themes of charity and family unity as part of the “Christmas Spirit”; but here in South Central among Chicana/o Latino students, it has something else to teach. Here Dickens epitomizes the national character as an ideal template in an educational context. The holiday program is officially renamed as a winter season program , but the play itself is about the Christian holiday of Christmas. Though the setting is 19th century England, Scrooge is intimately recognizable as part of a mythic U.S. early narrative.

There are several adaptations of this play that include updates to represent multicultural expressions; not to mention other Christmas pieces such as Gary Soto’s “Too Many Tamales” which reflect more of the schools Chicana/o Latino cultural connections. Of surprise in this situation is the lack of incorporation of culturally relevant material. Both teachers are part of the multicultural teaching paradigm being propagated as standard curriculum of “Teach for America” and yet ignore the overt performance of whiteness in this play.⁹⁶ Performance theory is an aspect of this research, but here the students may be credited with literally acting “white.” The universal classification of this ritualized play appears to hide ethnic and national identities. English culture is very much in line with early America. The foundational schooling institutions

⁹⁶ Teach for America is a national private teacher corps serving socially and economically disadvantaged communities with a mission statement of countering underprivileged situations via highly trained and passionate teacher intervention. Recognition and appreciation of diversity is openly stated. http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/mission_and_approach.htm

are English models and *A Christmas Carol* fits accordingly as a complementary piece to the students schooling.

The performance approximates both actors and audience to American nationhood. This is the intersection of state identity politics. The school is an institution in service of the states needs. Socialization into nationhood is a primary objective; unfortunately nationhood is embedded with conflated race discourse. The idea of race and nation go hand in hand (Nicholson, 2001). American address equates Anglo cultural domains of whiteness.

This play has grown to ritual standings as it is recalled seasonally across the United States. The ritual breaches the stage boundaries as caroling is complementary of the season. Here in South Central will students will go caroling from classroom to classroom. Mr. T, the bilingual coordinator shares an anecdote of a former teacher (white) that took the students caroling around the neighborhood: “That was trippy...It was just weird seeing these brown kids go around singing door to door. It didn’t go well. I don’t think even the West Side did that? We had to talk to him about that...I’m telling you ...that was funny!”⁹⁷

The layered symbolism in the play is too great to pass as cosmetic; it becomes part of Anglo American reenactments. This act connects 21st century Chicana/o Latinos in South Central, to national nostalgia. For a moment, students “dressed” in whiteness

⁹⁷ Field notes: Mr T is Bilingual Coordinator. He mentions a former English teacher’s activity of taking students caroling around the neighborhood. Reference to the “west side” addresses the segregated pattern of the city. West LA is synonymous with white upper middle class.

mirror and repeat Native American childhood experiences of the assimilation schools. Students will learn to model and produce images of themselves as crafted from the dominant culture's outline. Their peers see the transparent costume "dress up." They respond with laughter and heckling as the actors take the stage to demonstrate their evaluation of the foreign. The audience will repeat this behavior with only one other performance in the holiday program, the Mexican folkloric dancers.

The other performances in the winter program include cheer groups, pop singers and Mexican folkloric dancers. The folkloric dancers are significant contrast markers to the other performers showcased in their overtly visible ethnic/ national representation. Mr. S, the principal announces: "And now Ms. M will present her group with some Mexican dancing." He did not add ethnic clarifiers to any other performance-he did not have too, they are invisible; yet they too have specific ethnic foundations. As a coincidental pattern of role reversals, the dancers are all the newcomer ESL students; they are the Mexican-Mexicans, the Chuntaros. They performed with equal preparation and investment as the Dickens' actors. The student audience found them equally amusing as visible by their laughter and heckling. It appears both costumed performances share a distance with the student audience.

The comparison between the play and dance is of inverse relationship types. The parents were culturally connected in the folkloric dancing whereas most students appeared disconnected. Students did not respond as interested to the both of these pieces performed as compared to the rap, pop, and cheer group. The room appeared apathetic.

In this regard both Dickens and Mexican folk culture share similar distance-students didn't care much for them. In a latter conversation with the folkloric teacher (Latina), Ms M validated my preliminary interpretation of the crowd's response: "These [U.S. born] students don't care about this [Mexican] dancing...they are more embarrassed than proud. I normally get no more than one or two of them [US born] but this year none... I just don't get it...I don't know why it's so hard... It's their culture after all! The only ones that really appreciate it are the parents...THEY (emphasis in original) like it a lot!"⁹⁸

There is an interesting pattern here. The audience is 97 percent Chicana/o Latino yet the center piece performance is a play about 19th century England. The performance is presented as a cornerstone classic of Americana. The students work hard to meet the required performance traits. The outcome produces a tiered participation. The more English fluent students (US born), shine upfront while the less fluent (Non and US born mix) take secondary background supporting roles. This segmented arrangement is insultingly transparent as playing out a master narrative. There is an important story being told here and it's not the one authored by Charles Dickens.

The story is simple. American nationalism exists as an identity domain which must be assimilated. American identity is manifested via a specific template: white, male, wealthy-elite, heterosexual, and Judeo-Christian. Students as part of their daily curriculum are schooled in every facet of these domains. It is not as overt as the play, in

⁹⁸ Field notes: Ms M. is an ESL teacher. She has an after school folkloric group. It is open to all students but is overwhelmingly composed exclusively of recent immigrants.

fact it is the normative application that makes this discussion more relevant-it occurs in continual miniscule acts that culminate in major transformative outcomes.

The difference between Assimilation versus acculturation is fundamental to the outcome of schooling practices for these students. If markers of stigma are not fully erased, then full incorporation is not possible-most will not fully assimilate. Those that successfully adopt the traits are recognized by both institution and playground society-the white washed, "*Los Americanizados*" the Americanized, the "good ones"- make it through with more access to resources and success.

Identity is a lived experience meaningfully grounded in the material world. The results of explicit identification as one type of student versus another produce a "lived identity" model. Adolescents are cognizant of a limited number of social positions of which everyone is required to find a place regardless of how inadequate the categories may be. Everyone is defined by an extensive collection of personal information and definitional experiences but the scholastic platform as regulatory context can only use some information. Ambiguity is problematic and thus not tolerated. Students will be pressured and molded to fit-in. The types, kinds and material outcomes of relationships teach and reinforce not only the identity domains in operation but also the rules of the system. Ideological Acceptance is essential. No one fits neatly into the limited social arrangement but few challenge the divisions. The social categories are accepted and reproduced to live in every entering generation. Students learn to perform their identity domains as they are made fully aware of the multiple social political categories in play.

Inequality is clear as some groups will merit more access and entry than others. The recent immigrant students as double outsiders display the game most clearly.

Summary: Working Together

This work conceptualizes the scholastic experience as composed of parallel and equally legitimate spaces-the official infrastructure of the school and the organic playground.

This project advances to examine the complementary relationships; both spaces tackling different components as part of a unified process. Both teach; the school officiates over the explicit state needs [social reproduction, economic, political organization and information management], while the playground handles culture as a total holistic expression.

This project's focus on empirical characteristics results in framing identity as a constructed unit, a by-product of a specific cultural context. Previous authors'(Weber, Foucault, Anderson, Bourdieu) work on identity highlight the function and detailed workings of state institutions as foundational analysis of identity and conclude that as kinship ties are disbanded, the state relies much more heavily on alternate mechanisms of transmission and control. Full attention is granted to the role of schools in shaping individual identities and the conflicts and contradictions associated with this process. The American school system as a cultural artifact, reveals itself to mirror the socio-political structure of the society from which it stems from. Capitalism and nationalism as American ideals are built-in to the school system and the success of their reproduction can be assessed by the "performances" and expressions in classrooms throughout the

United States. The school as site of social reproduction works within institutional mechanisms to meet fundamental society needs.

The educational institution is formulaic and operates in terms of regulations, standards, and consistency. It has very specific tasks to meet. It is rigid and does not adapt easily. On the contrary, the student playground culture is fluid, dynamic and highly responsive to adaptation. The student culture, the play ground will assure enculturation into the “folk” culture. The student body will implant the total arrangement on to the new comers. Their participation is equivalent to an accelerated course. Adolescent society will unofficially, but systematically provide the cultural immersion components which these newcomer students need to survive and understand their place in the American arrangement. The playground will project all necessary socio political realities of Chicano Latino identity and penetrate it on to new bodies. Students know all that is required not because they have intellectually processed it, but because they embody it. It becomes part of them at the epidermal level-habitus, embodiment.

Chapter 5: The Body-“Tuck In Your Shirt”

Throughout my visits to Adams there was a phrase that I heard repeatedly. It is not an exaggeration to state that it was voiced at one point, by every adult I encountered. The phrase uttered in hallways, cafeteria lines, courtyards and classrooms is “Tuck in your shirt.” It was repeated so frequently that the kids mockingly accompanied it with a melody-a sing song arrangement of “Tuck in your in shirt! Tuck it in...Tuck it in!” The song is a parody of a commercial for Glade product- “Glade plug-in. Plug it in...Plug it in!”⁹⁹

Adams like most schools in Los Angeles follows explicit dress code guidelines for its student population. Students must wear a uniform consisting of a white polo shirt and navy blue pants. The pants must be fitted-meaning that they cannot be overly large (baggy) nor drop below their waist (sag). It is difficult to quantify but it roughly translates to no more than two sizes larger than the waist line. The shirts are expected to be tucked in to the pants-thus the phrase, “tuck it in.”

The use of uniforms was implemented in 2000 as one of several changes designed to reform the school. Adams during this period was classified as an “underperforming” and “high risk” school; the standardized test results ranked the school in the lowest percentile. In addition, the scholastic environment was determined unsafe due to perceived gang activity. Uniforms were adopted through the Los Angeles Unified School District as part of a responsive plan to create “professional learning environments”

⁹⁹Phrase “*Tuck it in*” comes from a commercial for a house fragrance product-Glad plug in.

intended to result in better performing schools.¹⁰⁰ It is important to note that the dress change is shared nationwide as a strategy of intervention from the “top.” President Bill Clinton’s state of the union speech, clearly cemented the already fomenting feeling that a uniform dress code was key to not only helping students succeed but protecting their lives-“I challenge all our schools to teach character education, to teach good values and good citizenship. And if it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms.”¹⁰¹

The above material brings to question the role of the state when applied to education. The rights of citizens within a state arrangement are protected under constitutional guidelines. Students within schools have a limited or at least modified interaction with the state. For example, why is the 1st amendment right of freedom of speech as expression in dress infringed via dress code regulation? In 1965, this debate was introduced into the courts with a resulting conclusion that schools are a “special place”; “the role of the state as educator is different from the role of the state as sovereign” (Burnsma 2004:56). The school is entitled to exercise infringement on the freedom of speech of individual bodies as dress expressions under the guise of protection of the greater community. This act of control is for the students’ “own good.”

¹⁰⁰ Conversation with Mr. Taft, Vice principal, [insert full sentence from field notes where he discusses the reason for uniform implementation.

¹⁰¹ President William Jefferson Clinton, State Of The Union Address, U.S. Capitol, January 23, 1996 <http://clinton2.nara.gov/WH/New/other/sotu.html>

As we continue with this conversation, it serves us to acknowledge that discussions of school attire have a long history expressing trends of acceptance, rejection and energetic debates. Today we simply repeat a view point where implementation of school dress codes are designed to foster, pro academic perceptions, increase academic achievements and alter a threatening school climate (Burnsma 2004). The reform actions demonstrate a belief as faith where “underperformance” outcomes are explained by dysfunctional cultural practices. A critique of the education system is forsaken for conclusions of student’s cultural incompatibility. “These people still think they’re in Mexico...They have to let go of that. You know what I mean? That’s what we’re working with...It’s like starting from scratch.”¹⁰² It is believed that success will come with the accommodation and acceptance of the appropriate cultural program.

The ideals of school transformations via attire change contrast the reality of playground outcomes. The work of Brunnsma and Rockquemore (1988) reveals there is no correlation with uniform use and school performance. Students not only feel less positive about the school experience but also expressed “small...yet statistically significant negative effect of uniform policy on academic achievement”-scores actually drop (Burnsma 2004;xxi). The presentation here is not to review the history of school uniforms, but to point out that the uniform persists at the center of education because of its symbolic value of the social norms applied on to the student body. There is an expected presentation to school attendance. The uniform is representative of a readiness

¹⁰² Mr. C- Assistant Principle [date]: comments on recent immigrant student’s and his belief that their Mexican culture must to change in order to succeed in the United States school.

to learn; it is the professional attire. Students are taught to respect the uniform and invest great amounts of time into maintaining it within the acceptable guidelines as representation of their commitment to the school. A poster on the wall expresses this sentiment: “Show your Adam’s pride. Wear your uniform every day. A clean shirt and pressed pants means you care about your education.” All stake holders participate in the enforcement of appropriate uniform use. Everyday teachers as well as staff, make a conscious effort to monitor the use of uniforms. Students that do not meet the criteria are sent to the dean’s office to be reprimanded with citations ranging from “yard duty” (trash pickup) to expulsion from school attendance for the day. The infractions begin the students’ “write up”-documentation as an accumulated file addendum as failing to meet the dress expectations. “Yea I’ve been written up, a bunch of times...I don’t care. It doesn’t matter no more. You know? Who cares?..I’m gonna dress like I wanna dress!”¹⁰³

The emphasis on appropriate uniform use as regulatory criteria is differentially applied across students. Boys are reprimanded for wearing the uniform too loose (baggy), but there is no reprimand for using the uniform too tight. Many girls wear the uniform in smaller sizes than their measured waist line but there is no regulation of this pattern. This difference in monitoring leads to *defacto* outcomes. More boys than girls are sent for disciplinary action due to uniform violations. The more boys go through formal write ups, the more their infractions escalate to more terminal penalties. In addition, the repetitive exclusion from class results in reduced instruction time when

¹⁰³ 8th Student male, “Jorge” [date, time], comments on his experience on being sent to dean’s office for wearing his uniform too big.

compared to girls. “I love my girls...they’re so nice and helpful, all busy bees... But huh! Don’t get me started on the boys!”¹⁰⁴

There is also a game of bravado and defiance among the male students that result from the constant monitoring. Adults call on the boys for wearing uniforms out of ordinance at which point they have to tuck in their shirts on the spot. As soon as the teacher turns around and walks away, the student un tucks his shirt and the game resumes. This cat and mouse game marks a key characteristic of school culture-opposition and resistance to authority. It is an axiom for adolescents to see conformity and obedience as not “cool.” The transition from child to adulthood is often associated with rebellion but male participation in acts of defiance takes on greater significance when conflated “racialized” identities.

Uniforms in the “hood” (same clothing, different wear outcomes)

President Clinton’s reference to students killing each other over “designer jackets” is intended for inner city youth. This is important because as uniform codes are implemented, it will affect the inner city and students of color differently than suburban experiences. Understanding “schooling” as not universal, it is then necessary to reframe analysis through culturally specific filters-i.e. Ethnicity, Class and “Race”-in order access the differential meaning.

¹⁰⁴ Ms M. discusses the difference between boys and girls. “Girls are better at school than boys”

From the classroom:

The following incident demonstrates identity as a lived experience, as applicable to role of uniforms in shaping the lives of students. Mr. R is a young “White” teacher from the USC teaching credential program. He plays the radio for the students under the condition that they keep working: “Ok I’m going to turn on the radio but don’t make me regret it.”¹⁰⁵ The students are very appreciative; they bob their heads, move and mouth the lyrics to the songs. The radio station is set to *reggaeton* music- a blend of reggae and Latin American genres. The class is designated “English only” and is taught as native English learners, most pupils are U.S. born. A student (“Jorge”) enters late, “tardy” and is surprised to hear reggaeton music being played. His facial expression cues surprise. Mr. R has his back turned to this student but recognizes the voice as Jorge greets the teacher.

Jorge: I’m here Mr. R.

Mr. R: You’re “tardy” Jorge, the assignment is on the board, open up your journal and get to work.

Jorge: You got it Mister. (Jorge opens his back pack and takes out his journal. He strolls to the back of the room to sharpen his pencil. He struts down the aisle dancing and mouthing the lyrics between the desks. Jorge is enjoying the music-the song is “*Gasolina*” by Daddy Yankee.)

Mr. R finally turns around after working with another student and sees Jorge.

Mr. R (yells): Jorge! What have I told you about your shirts! Tuck in that shirt...and those pants! (Jorge’s pants are worn large and low on the waist-sagging.)

Jorge: Oops! Sorry Mister! (Jorge begins to tuck in his shirt in the middle of the room as the whole class stops to watch the show)

¹⁰⁵Mr. R, date, time. Field notes source

Mr. Reed: Jorge! Do that outside, get out! You're not allowed in here until you fix that uniform. (Jorge walks out and knocks. Once his attire is up to "code", he is then permitted to reenter the class room and begin working.)

Meaning

The above incident is significant in that it addresses my hypothesis regarding the disconnection between the institution and its agents' understanding of diversity as contrasting the student's view. Mr. R saw Jorge's dress as gang attire. Jorge was emulating reggaeton attire which parallels hip hop culture. The clothing style is oversized and baggy. The school identifies oversized, baggy clothing as gang affiliated attire and is alarmed. Students on the other hand classify Jorge as belonging to the "Playas" or "Ballers," but not "Cholos." Both of these peer group categories share the practice of oversized clothing as part of group identification, but students are never confused. In the eyes of the student culture, any similarities between the peer groups are mute. The difference between a "Cholo" and "Playa" is significant enough to mark separate identity groups. The two groups contrast one another in material and social characteristics. "Playas" are popular and carry positive connotations/ status (symbolic capital) within the school social arrangement. They have material status goods such as jewelry and brand name clothing. Jorge struts through the school as a type of celebrity. Though not universal, most students gravitate towards him, demonstrating he exists within a status position where Playas represent the "cool" aesthetic. *Se creen los muy, muys!... como que fueran pinches super estrellas* (they think they're all that, as if they

were [fuck'n] super stars).¹⁰⁶ Cholos are also well known in school but that does not grant them popularity as an appreciated recognition. Cholos do not carry the symbolic nor economic capital of the “playas” also known as “players”, “pretty boys” and “the populars.”

Who are the playas? The playas are parallel groups to those known as “the preps”, “rich kids”, or “cool kids” of other schools. These groups are part of a popular social identity granting its members prestige status and social benefits. The in-school pattern mirrors the adult counterparts outside. “Rich kids,” and “Preps,” role play what their parents act out in real life. The core characteristics of class based distinctions are foundation markers supporting playground divisions-a huge difference between the preps and the playas. Paul Willis (1990) and Douglas Foley (1977) argue for the economic and hierarchical reflections and reproduction of schools. The preps are direct representatives of class divisions’ existent outside of the school but here the playas do not correspond to such lived identities. The parents of Playas are poor. Instead Playas correspond to an artistic identity. They get their cues from a “culture industry” as a multimedia form of meta communication-songs, music videos, language, clothing, shoes and fashion trends. Consistent with Theodore Adorno’s model, the value inherent in the content systemically governs and directs the student culture to perform differences as exchange commodities (Adorno 1991:99). Students understand clearly that there is aggregate value in adopting their multiple regalia for display. Playas in the student’s terms are: “stylish”, “trendy”,

¹⁰⁶7th grade, Immigrant Student, responding to question “who are the players?”

“cool”, “popular”, “good looking”, “they got it going on”, “are put together.” In etic terms, they are esteemed as representative of material success.

There is also a gendered application of this title. The term Playas is a modified term of “players” which is a common term referencing extensive experience in courting of the opposite sex, as in “playing the field.” Player is rarely applied to female students. Young women are “populars”, “pretty girls” but seldom “playas.” The players are boys. A key marker of this identity association is the pattern of male promiscuity. Young men are encouraged to have multiple girlfriends-honeys, *jainas*, “chicken heads.”¹⁰⁷ Boys gain status in their ability to court and date many females but the girls are not able to use the same format to gain status. In fact, there is usually an inverse relationship between a girl’s promiscuity and her degree of respected status. The relationship of gender roles is consistent with outside cultural norms. Given that gender roles are in constant change and debate, I expected much more deviation from stereotypic gender formats. It is surprising to note the firmness and livelihood of these “traditional” gendered patterns still in use. These observations point toward a necessary and consequent research address.

“Se hacen [pendejos], No ven porque no les conviene!” (*They make asses of themselves, they don’t see because it’s not in their interest*)

By the third month at Adams, most everyone knew who I was and what I was there to do;

I was the UCR student, “writing a paper for a class.” On campus I explained myself repeatedly. I was studying the politics of intra-ethnic differentiation as part of middle

¹⁰⁷*Jainas* is a old Chicano/ Calo reference term for female, woman or girlfriend. Chicken head is a relatively new term for female partners. It is rooted in urban language and generated through hip hop music. It is a derogatory term referencing the practice of oral sex.

school culture. If asked for more details, I offered that I was studying social groups as part of school culture within a Chicano Latino context with particular attention to a disagreement between the adult and adolescent vision of social categories-“basically, how kids see more than the adults.” Explaining myself was not that big of an issue since each person made sense of my work in their own way. No one challenged as to trivialize or assess the merit of my work, until I met Ms. B. Ms. B is the (unofficial) parent coordinator for the school. Mr. A has the office and actual paid title, but Ms. B is the one in charge. She is the one person all parents go to for assistance. Every morning I greeted Ms. B as I signed-in and was granted my daily dated “visitor” sticker. She asked who I was there to see and I replied with the name of the respective teacher on my task list. But on this day she called me back to her desk to find out more: “*Tu quien eres?* (Who are you?) *Que haces aqui?* (What are you doing here?)”

Though not surprised, I was slightly concerned because her inquiry demonstrated real concern and protection. Without thinking, I immediately went into my scripted research “pitch.” After a pause Mr. B replied with “*explícame eso en Cristiano*” (explain that to me in Christian—meaning in understandable language). A bit thrown off, I reframed and explained I was simply studying the ways the students cliqued and grouped themselves into many types of students and not just one kind. She starred with an unreadable expression. Nervously, I proceeded to add that I was also comparing the way that the students saw more diversity than the school. She continued her unchanged expression. I searching for a reply eagerly stressed that I was concerned with the effects of such a limited vision by the school. I stopped talking, she starred. We both stood

silently in the hallway. My anxiety grew as I waited for reassurance to inform me I could continue on with my day in the school. Finally Ms. B. in half smile broke the silence with: “*Ahh!! Entonces eso es lo que estudias? Pues si...Se hacen [pendejos]. No ven porque no les conviene!*” (Ah!! So that’s what you’re studying? Well then...They make [asses] of themselves. They don’t see because it’s not in their interest). In relief, I sighed comforted this was my final clearance. She appeared pleased when I told her she was the first person to make me nervous and shared a story: “The other day, a bunch of people from the district office, all suited up, stopped by. I stopped them here at the front desk and told them they needed to sign-in. They were surprised and one of the men said, ‘Do you know who I am?’ ‘Yes I do’ I told him, ‘you are Mr. Romer, the superintendent.’ He smiled, signed-in and said, ‘Good! Keep up the good work.’”

I thought through the above moment and reflected on the transparency of the research hypothesis in question. It was clear to Ms. B that the school was operating under a “design” of convenience. There is little debate in stating that it is not in their interest to see so much detail of social identity. There is an obvious limitation in what teachers as institutional agents distinguish as notable identity characteristics among students. Mr. R could only reference from his narrow set of identity labels, but the student culture identifies with much more intricate differentiation. To understand why there is such a disaccord, it is necessary to credit the nature of institutions; they are slow to change and incorporate the needs and traits of culture as a dynamic and constantly changing mechanism of behaviors-a pattern serving as critique for many activists hesitant of working with institutions.

The myopic view as well as lack of adaptability is not by coincidence. The purpose of institutions are to regulate, control and order human behavior into consistent and predicable forms and thus “reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable (but not necessarily efficient) structure for human interaction” (Douglas 1990:6). Accommodation to diversity requires conscientious effort beyond the scope of bureaucratic needs. The school categories and scope of vision are in line to the exterior social arrangement-reflective of power, politics, and economic structures in operation. The applied generalizations are in favor of the educational apparatus, not the individuals. “Bureaucratic institutions...are self-perpetuating and averse to all innovation and change which is not in line with their own intentionalized regulations;” the goal is to reproduce a preset arrangement (Mommsen 1989:115). The school will fight to confirm and confer “ideal” images of diversity, even when confronted with the real diversity.

The education system is responsible for “ideological management” (Spring, 2000). It ignores the complexity of the playground not simply out of convenience but more importantly as part of function. Schools are hyper naturalized; their structural organization and limitations are purposefully overlooked. Here we emphasize their limited guidelines as scripted from designs. “Education as a political resource is bureaucratized, often as means of elite domination including the state” (King, 1983: 64). Rules, order and efficiency must be assessed in line with assembly of a final output product. The state stands as the unreferenced supervisor of this regulation and intent. The state does not need to acknowledge all diversity; its bureaucratic taxonomy is reflective of a specific political economy in existence.

Conversely, some institutions make it a point to see exactly what the population they service sees. My early work in prison research demonstrated that all institutional agents were not only fully aware of the multiplicity of group social diversity on the “yard,” but were actively invested in being fully informed of the details of complex relationships among the many social identities (Diaz Reyes, 1997). The prison system as an institution relies on its agents to be “in synch” with the way the population categorizes its world in order to reduce difficulties in its operation.

The schools clerical diversity arrangements are mechanically applied onto a dynamic and multifaceted organic student population. The playground society does not have to match up to the structured order. The disaccord is not problematic to the school because of the different power levels in exercise. Unlike prison structures where the inmate society’s group arrangement is incorporated to an administrative logic, here the playground material is forced to fit into the preset schema. Penitentiaries assure full inclusion of all possible information on to bureaucratic outlines to minimize threats due to lack of information. Ignorance of an accurate student identity arrangement and culture is not a threat to schools. Adolescents are not perceived as powerful and being disconnected and out of synch is not a “high risk.”

“They don’t know what’s up because they’re not from here”
The school is also out of “synch” with the student population because it is not a member of the community. For urban populations the school as an institution is a foreign entity. The teachers drive in for the day and drive out to their respective homes outside of the

service communities. The occurrences around Adams are only relevant with the limits of the school day (7.45 to 2.45pm). In their absence, the kids inform and update the teachers of neighborhood news. Sitting in the back of the room, I heard children constantly keeping their teachers up to date with what happens around them once school is out: “Mister, this weekend cops came over to where I live, they blocked off the street and told us to stay inside.” “Miss, when we were walking home yesterday a car crashed into the post...There was blood everywhere!”¹⁰⁸

This pattern reveals a sense of *confiansa* (trust) (Velez-Ibañez 1983, Valenzuela 2003). The students as young individuals feel connected to their teachers and by informing them of their personal details, reveal *confiansa* as sincere caring and intimacy. Students want to include the adults into their lives past the exit of the bell ring. They do this not simply because they are kids; but because they wish to establish deep relationships of trust. The student-teacher relationships are clearly structured along education criteria and not intentionally setup for such personal inclusion, but here the students change the terms. The teachers may not care too much for personal exchanges; in fact many remind the adolescents that they only want to hear about what happens inside the school, but it does not change the desire to push the conversations out of the class assignments. This act of inclusion demonstrates that students care about their teachers in ways that is not overtly part of the institutional arrangement. In telling their story, they break down the dividing barriers. The situation is made more difficult for

¹⁰⁸6th grade boys, inform Mr O. on police incident during the weekend.
7th grade girls, inform Ms M on car accident on Hill Street and Jefferson.

immigrant populations where language, culture and social position become clear dividing boundaries but they too extend relationships.

“It was weird at first. I grew up with stories of bringing an apple for your teacher, but not whole meals. I doesn’t happen anymore because I told them to stop, but the kids would bring *enchiladas, mole, arroz con pollo* and you know, full dinners. It was humbling because I know they’re not rich and yet they shared their food with me. It got so bad I couldn’t mention any type of food class because it would magically be brought in that week. I came from Seattle, parents didn’t do that.”¹⁰⁹

The school structure may be systemically responsible in producing such disconnect from a student population but the teachers as individuals themselves are also culturally distant. Urban schools reflect a pattern where “White” teachers teach “Brown” and “Black” students. The above incident with “Jorge” is made more awkward in that, though Mr. R played reggaeton for his class, yet he appeared to not know enough about this genre as a sub culture to identify “Jorge” as a member. The students on the other hand, could mark a difference the teacher could not. Mr. R received his teaching preparation less than mile away (USC), and has been in this community for approximately seven years-a significant length of time for him not to “know what’s up.” Yet Mr. R is representative of a pattern that exists across most urban schools.

Inner city schools are staffed by a young teacher demographic composed of out of state and local credential programs and also associated with a high degree of “turnover”- difficulty in retention of teachers. A marker of high turnover is measured by the length

¹⁰⁹ Mr O, ESL teacher comments on his students’ parents providing home cooked meals to show appreciation.

of teaching experience. In Adams the average teacher stays less than 5 years.¹¹⁰ It is important to note that there exists a small cohort of teachers with over 10 years of teaching history at Adams and a few with over 22 years. The students call these teachers the old timers or “*veteranos*.”¹¹¹

Recently more teachers have been entering inner city schools from programs such as “Teach for America”. Teach for America is a national program which places new teachers in low income urban and rural schools. The aim of this program is to participate in alleviating educational inequality for urban and rural children by creating a teaching corps of eager, highly motivated and academically prepared individuals consciously taking on the task of combating educational disparity. Their mission statement recognizes the need for diversity among the teachers to reflect the community they service. Although their teaching corps is composed “28% people of color”-a number much higher than the national college graduate correspondence-it still means that the majority of placements in Brown and Black schools will be of White teachers.¹¹² This pattern is replicated here in Adams. Adams has 4 teachers from “Teach for America”- three White and one Brown (Latino). As the sole Latino teacher of the program, Mr. L expressed discomfort with the divided arrangement. “It’s funny, I joined [Teach for America]...because I wanted to see diversity. I came to L.A. expecting to work in a multicultural community. I didn’t expect L.A. to be so segregated. I remember calling

¹¹⁰ Mr. S [Principal], stating that his school has an average teacher residency of five years. He adds that the rate of retention has gradually been increasing. When he stated in 1998, it was 2 yrs.

¹¹¹ *Veteranos* translates literally to veteran. It is a term referring to old gang members, usually thought of no longer active in gang participation. It is associated with a sense of respect as having survived in to an age of seniority.

¹¹² Teach for America data.

my girlfriend and telling her, ‘it’s all brown [students] here’...ha! ha! I could have stayed in New York”¹¹³

¹¹³ Mr. L, Teach for American participant. Though fully aware of the program’s designed placement into inner city locations, he was uncomfortable with the segregated arrangement of the school. He returned to New York after his second year. “I can’t get used to it. It’s not just the school that is divided; it’s the city too...I just don’t like it here.”

The Model Student Template

The incident between Mr. R and Jorge gains significance in that it demands address of the topic of student models or templates. There are specific terms of educational acceptance—Jorge could not be permitted to enter the classroom unless he looked appropriately, like a “good student.” The constructed visual model works in conjunction with a cultural behavior template to form good students. A poster board hung prominently reads: “Good students show up to school prepared: 1. Wear uniform, 2. Have materials, 3. Well rested, 4. Respectful, 5. Ready to learn.” It is clear that the regulation of uniforms is linked to the school’s reform agenda. Parents, teachers and students consciously accept the school dress code is based on the belief that clothing equates to good students. But this issue is much more complex. There is a myth about what makes a good student or more appropriately renamed as “model student.” The successful scholastics performance is credited to being a gift. “No knows why some are able to overcome the odds [succeed] and others are not” (Milner, 2004:16). It seems academic success is perceived as a blend of magic, talent and hard work. I heard teachers repeatedly speak of students as “smart,” “gifted,” and “good kids” but no one talked about simply fitting a mold. Little credit is placed on simply approximating a structural template as key to being granted institutional acceptance and thus success.

An expression of acceptance via template match-up comes from a conversation with an English teacher (Ms. E.). In one of my class visits, Ms. E voiced a complaint of his students’ lack of writing “talent.” In agreement I responded: “Yes it’s a trick to get the kids write well.”

Ms. E.: Ha ha! Yes it's hard to find the ones that really get it...you can't expect everyone to be a good writer. Not everyone is going to be Shakespeare.

Me: True, but everyone can get this writing assignment.

Ms. E: Well not every can be a good writer.

Me: But may by we can teach them to be "good writers" (quotation hand gestures). As an elementary teacher my students got a lot of attention as being "good writers." They weren't necessarily gifted. They were only following my template. We did the same daily warm up before starting class every day. So much so, I actually feel bad because I think I may have drilled their individual creativity out of them.

Ms. E: What do you mean?

Me: Every morning, I had them write a noun (car) and form a simple sentence (I have a car). They were then directed to add an adjective to the noun as subject and make a new sentence (My car is red). From that point they were committed to writing about this specific subject and were asked to elaborate by following a preset collection of questions based on the English standard requirements: What do you do with this item? Who gave you this item? Etc.

Ms. E: I don't see how this is a trick?

Me: Well the "trick" is that everyone was taught to follow this template. Even the principal congratulated me for my students' performance. Their writing appeared great, but lacked any real creativity of expression. Every single paper was structurally identical. Only the details differed.

There are different cultural models of communication but my students were rewarded because this specific template was acceptable, not by the content.

Ms. E: Huh? I guess...I never thought of it in that way.

Students operate under tight parameters of acceptance. Multiculturalism and pluralist perspectives are advocated in education, but schools demonstrate very little tolerance for diversity.

“Do you want to wear a uniform for the rest of your lives?”

On a Thursday I visited Mr. G’s 8th grade class to observe their participation in an event for the AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination). The students were to hear from a guest speaker on the topic of “the road to college.”¹¹⁴ Unfortunately the speaker did not show up and I was asked to stand in and speak to the class about my college experiences. My instructions were explicitly to discuss my ethnic family background (Mexican immigrant), community residence (South Central) and overcoming of obstacles (money, work, school). As possible motivation Mr. G suggested I emphasize my obstacles and hardships, so “the students could relate.”¹¹⁵ I spoke about my upbringing in the area, my attendance in Adams 20 years ago and about my educational history. Not interested in repeating the rote “I made it and you can too” speech, I skipped

¹¹⁴ Mr G’s [date] agenda board read: 1. Journal entry 2. Essay outline 3, AVID Speaker-“The road to college”

¹¹⁵ Field notes [date]: Mr. G, “It might be good if you emphasize your hardships...you know? Growing up in the hood and well you know? Difficulties you’ve had. That way the students can know you’re one of them and can relate more.”

over the expected laundry list of “difficulties” and instead offered a detailed description of college life and variety of subjects of study available. Students asked questions and I attempted with outmost creativity, to translate and connect their questions to specific subjects, disciplines or classes.

Student1 (Male)-“I’m into computers, what can I do?”

Me: “Ah yes, that’s a very strong field, you can get a B.S. in computer science or a Ph D.”

Student 2 (Female): “Do they have classes on outer space?”

Me: Yes that discipline is called Astronomy.

Student 3 (Male)-“What if I want to be like the guys in CSI” (The class erupts in laughter and student shies away)

Me: “No, that’s totally possible, which character do you have in mind? Is it “Sully” or agent Diane Reed? You can get a bachelor's degree in biomedical science, forensic anthropology or toxicology.

Student 4 (Female): “I like to know how things work”

Me: “Yes, mechanical engineering, that’s cool I can get more info on that and ask Mr. G to pass it on to if you like. That reminds me, I’ve brought UCR catalogs for everyone to take home and check out programs and departments. This is actually a good time for you to start planning since you’ll be entering high school soon.

The question and answer session soon faded as the student’s interests in college information diminished. They sat in silence and with blank stares. They moved to wanting to know about the school during my attendance in 1985. My talk about college preparation was interrupted with questions about Adams: “What was it like? What did the

students wear? “Wow!” They didn’t have to wear uniforms?” It was clear I was not connecting with them in regards to the intended AVID program of college material. I didn’t mind. This was the most intense interaction I had received from any of the 8th graders and it really seemed like sincere curiosity, so I continued to answer their “off topic” inquiries.

The barrage of questions into Adams trivia was abruptly interrupted. Mr. G had become frustrated. He shouted out: “you guys are ridiculous! Here you have this gentlemen, Mr. Diaz taking time out to tell you about his road to college and all you can do is mess around with your silly questions? You’re not taking this seriously! You guys need to get your act together. You’re not little kids anymore. You’ll be moving on to high school in a few months...get your act together... what do think is going to happen? This isn’t a joke; *do you want to wear a uniform for the rest of your lives?*” The students became quiet and startled into attention in response to his lecture. The room filled with an uncomfortable silence. Sensing the change, Mr. G apologized for interrupting me and asked I continue with my talk. I stumbled back on to topic. The class atmosphere at this point had transformed. The students in their best “model behavior” of good students were quiet and at attention. Minutes later the bell rang and class ended at which point Mr. G expressed his frustrations. “These kids just don’t get it. We’re trying to get them ready and instead they goof off.” In the absence of the scheduled speaker I was asked to continue my talk to his later fifth period of 8th graders. The previous scene did not repeat itself. This second group of students listened “attentively” and though minimal, managed to pose a few questions regarding college.

I left that day's work quite moved. It was obvious this experience was important. The phrase "do you want to wear a uniform the rest of your life?" stayed with me. It resonated in such a way that I knew I had to address it. Such a small phrase yet it cut straight through to the point. In his moment of frustration, Mr. G articulated the gravity and depth of significance behind the uniforms' theoretical "read" meaning.

Unpacking Uniform Meaning:

The phrase, "Do you want to wear uniform for the rest of your life?" is layered in significance. To begin with, it signals to a critique of service oriented work such as fast food, and janitorial work—employment sectors requiring uniforms. Appropriation of uniform use introduces class relationships. The attire clearly marks and divides expected labor roles for those dressed for work. The clothing becomes "transformational." The clothing assigns membership and reduces individuality. The uniform signals the body's value as labor commodity. As a commodity, bodies are interchangeable; one employee is just as good as another. Human uniqueness is minimized. The body is exchanged for productive use and is appropriated by the employer. While at work all employees must wear the uniform appropriately within specific guidelines; signaling an explicit social identity change in order to comply with the rules and expectations of employment arrangement. The body in uniform is representative of a change in relationships. Failure to comply is accompanied with reprimands escalating to eventual dismissal-steps students will recognize well from school.

This phrase which Mr. G so appropriately offered in his scolding is indicative of the transformative wishes behind education. When Mr. G says, “do you want to wear a uniform for the rest of your life” he voices the class relationships which this community represents. Though his words can be interpreted broadly, the students understand the intended meaning. They have heard their parents emphasize the importance of schooling to their economic and social success. “*Yo le digo, mira mijo tu no quieres trabara limpiando casas, dale duro a la escuela* (I tell him-look son, you don’t want to work cleaning houses, give it your all at school).”¹¹⁶ Education is understood as the path to their class liberation.

The students live the class relationship of the working poor. Their parents are the service workers of the larger community. They work in the warehouses, restaurants, domestic spaces, mechanic shops, and garment industry—they are the community of manual labor of the city. Though these employments are essential in sustaining the economy, the reality is that the parents do not wish to pass on these responsibilities to their children. Every parent I spoke with wanted their child to do something different from their current employment task. When asked about their work, they simply said: “*es duro*,” (its hard) , “*quien quiere vivir que lo anden mandando todo el tiempo*” (who wants to live with someone telling you what to do all the time), “*no es vida, vivir tan limitado, de cheque a cheque*” (it’s no life, living so limited, [pay]check to [pay] check).”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Parent meeting: Parents voice advice to their children to work hard in school.

¹¹⁷ Several Parents discuss their motives for wanting different employment participation for their children.

Uniform use among this middle school population is framed like most education issues currently in debate; complex structural analysis is pushed back in favor for more “common sense” conclusions. Dress codes are meant to produce better educational outcomes. Unfortunately the research (present work included) signals that uniforms reinforce negative perceptions such as marking of class demarcation and self esteem stigma, especially true for minority populations (Burnsma 2004; 96). The practice of dress codes as reform a program plays itself out ironically for an already marginalized community, in that it adds distinctions of social stratification and scholastics self consciousness-two things the school uniform advocates articulated as intended counters. In this urban context, the uniform takes on another meaning; it is “county wear.” County is a reference to the government as noticeable in other instances of this referent-i.e. “county food” and “county rushers.” Both terms state unappreciated relationships with government programs. In the first case, the cafeteria food is understood as government food and in the second, recipients of free or reduced lunch program are critiqued.

Uniform use among school attendees may commonly be connected to the wealthy preparatory schools, but it is more accurately rooted to the social underclass, as regulation of school attire was first applied to orphan and poor children (Davidson and Rae, 1990). As we turn to present usage, the practice reinforces similar social arrangements. The more wealthy public schools, lacking a need for urgent intervention actions of reform, did not opt for adopting school uniforms and so today we see a division where freedom of clothing expression is not only correlated with socioeconomic position but to an extent, a “color line” as well. A student states, “It’s just us. It’s always

us. I bet you the kids in the West Side [White area] don't have to wear these ugly uniforms!"¹¹⁸ Stigma accompanies the attire of schooling in that not only is uniform use not by choice but is also a constant reminder of the subordinated position students hold in respect to the scholastic institution.

The difficulty in unpacking the application of school uniforms is made more complex in that this issue is layered in meaning. It is not just about acting "White"-as referenced in chapter four-but also about dressing White. The history of racialized communities such as African and Native American students serve as ample demonstration of this practice. We only have to review the images of early school experiences where children were dressed in the 18th century Western fashion, as dress transformation, clearly reaffirmed the terms of acceptance. The children's home cultures were not compatible with the insitutional programs. Entry and success in school was predicated on transformation and "(re)fabrication" of bodies in line with Euro-American templates of the period. The present experience of Brown and Black children in urban schools repeats the pattern of "dress up" as a requirement for school entry. The act of dressing is about assimilating into a white, male, Judeo-Christian, heterosexual template. Once you can speak, dress, act, and think like the dominant cultural norm then you are "all right."

¹¹⁸ 8th grade, female, student comments on her belief that students West Los Angeles (euphemism for white area) do not wear school uniforms: "It's just us. It's always us. I bet you the kids in the West side don't have to wear these ugly uniforms."

Clothing as a technology

In line with Ines Dussel (2004), clothing becomes a technology of “ruling...the actual mechanisms through which authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalise the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable...the humble and mundane mechanisms which appear to make it possible to govern” (McWilliam, 1996:15). Technology is both a noun and verb. As an object it stands as set item designed to extract, manipulate, produce and or reproduce resources and as an action it expresses the applied techniques. In the class context, clothing as fabric draping the body is the primary technology and technique of molding. Here we must frame the "classroom as a technology that combines different techniques...in order to shape the [lives] of children in precise ways" (Ines Dussel 2004: 89). “When the students wear their whites and blues, there is only one [kind of student]. There are no boys, no girls, no Latinos and no Blacks, no rich and no poor, just Adam Patriots.”¹¹⁹ The uniform is an assimilating technique where individual and group diversity is erased and molded to match the institution’s extent of vision for student identification-the school mascot. Under this model, the ideal student is simply a “Patriot” and intra-ethnic differentiation as part of school processes of marking and making difference are hidden due to the uniform clothing. The school believes to magically avert social differentiation by covering “lived identity” domains with uniformity and thus approximate the physical templates of preparatory dress.

¹¹⁹ Mr. Z, Assistant Principal.

“It's different when we do it”

The discussion on the politics of uniform use is essentially about fabric clothing the body. As one teacher said, “I don’t get it, what is the big deal? It’s only clothing for [gosh] sake!”¹²⁰ But clothing is more than a form of regulation. My research model anticipated that clothing would mark membership within the multiple social groups. Clothing would be a tool of ascription; “readable” signs of meaning marking social arrangements. It is clear “clothes themselves [must] be regarded as instruments through which [a social law] maintains its hold on bodies and its members, regulates them and exercises them ” (De Certeau, 1984:147). The conversations around uniforms represent precise membership “codes” that speak via the body (Dussel, 2004). The critique of dress code implementation lies not necessarily on how uniformity among the group expresses membership but exists in the debate over a sense of control and freewill. Individual choice as agency is taken for granted among adolescents.

On a Friday lunch period I sat in the cafeteria as a group of students explained the social cliques visibly separated by table cohorts: “On that side, the Players kick it...Cholos over there and skaters like to sit by that corner....”¹²¹ The conversation developed into detailed characteristics associated by each respective group. The students excitedly and with outstanding anthropological detail, “broke it down:” “naw...Mister you just don’t know...we got this whole [social] thing going on”, “it’s like that movie

¹²⁰ Mr. M., ESL Teacher.

¹²¹ Group of students explain the different locations throughout the school held by the multiple social identity cliques.

[Mean Girls]...everybody is running with a different crew.”¹²² They taught and I listened. The table “DL1” in chapter three can be referenced for more ethnographic detail. In my pursuit for more material, as the naïve observer, I introduce the topic of school uniforms “How can you tell the groups apart if everyone wears the same thing?” Their reaction was complete astonishment; the students’ faces expressed difficulty in accepting my inability to distinguish the differences so obvious to them.

The student society is ruled and ordered by composite details visible in body aesthetics, clothes and styles speech and body language, music, space and territory and ritual activities (Milner, 2004). In many schools, status membership and boundaries are marked through clothing variability in brand names and trend styles, but Adams continues the divisions absent of tags and styles-“Not much to too it [dressing for school], I get up in the morning and it’s the same old shit...blue and whites every fuck’n day.”¹²³ Students in uniforms are just as apt to see the different peer group cliques as those in “regular” dress because the divisions are not superficial-they are embodied. The clothing associated with the respective categories of “Cholos,” “Nerds,” or “Skaters” only marks but does not hold the actual defining position.

As the conversation progressed, students eventually voice fatigue over constantly wearing the “same old shit.”¹²⁴ The group complained about how uniform use

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 8th grade male student discusses his limited morning clothing option:

¹²⁴ 8th grade male student: “This is lame; we have to wear the same old shit every day. It gets old! It would be cool for once, to able to wear my regular clothes to school.”

constrained their ability to express individuality. One student passionately expresses her displeasure:

“It doesn’t make any sense. Why do we have to wear these freak’n ugly uniforms? Who are they kidding, this isn’t a private school. They ain’t fooling nobody. This just sucks...seeing everybody the same. I’d like to be able to dress like I want to dress. You know? It’d be nice. Blue and white, that’s all there is. Except for the teachers, THEY get to wear what they want. THEY get to be themselves [emphasis in original].”

In response, I point out that the “emos” (tight shirts and tight pants), “cholos” (large shirts and sagging pants) and “players” (large shirts and sagging pants, shirt collars up, “popped”) appear to wear their uniforms in respective agreement, alike fashion. I state, “It looks like each group is in their own type of uniform” To this comment, the group takes offense and abruptly responds with “what are you talking about?”, “No we don’t,” and finally “It’s different when we do it!”

The school operates under an illusion where school peer group divisions are minimized via fabric uniformity on the body. Many school culture academics such as Murray Milner vouch for education policy requirements of uniform as “one way to eliminate the *possibility of variation*...[And] blunt some of the most blatant and damaging forms of status competitions among students” (Milner 2004:185). But the student world is not as simple to explain. The divisions of status and competition are not the result of clothing. Clothing differences are only mechanisms by which the existing class relationships are marked; they are costumes informing the audience of the multiple roles being played.

The regulation and control over the body is a continuous struggle; it is a process not an ‘act.’ Students may not be the creators of the grand politico-economic arrangements, but are the re-creators of given structural mechanisms visibly demonstrated within school as rituals of marking and making difference. The student body is fragmented into a complex and highly ordered society as a micro version of the adult world; albeit an accelerated course condensing lifelong processes into relatively short experiences. It is redundant to state that schooling is a learning process, but middle school is the place where they are initiated into normalizing the stratified world of inequality. Entry is tiered. Children have three years to practice before entering the more rigid stage of high school and finally on to “the real world” of adults.

Summary

If language is meaningful to ideological inventory, then the phrase “Tuck in your shirt” reveals that dress and clothing performances repeated daily through our schools are of grave cultural significance. The repetition, predictability and symbolism mark the regulation of the uniforms as a ritual. The academic characters follow scripts so close their acts become imbued with sacred meaning. The school is the stage. All participants are necessary for this exercise to reify its meaning but the multiple characters in uniform play out different power roles. On one side are the adults whom execute orders in line with safety and productive intentions and on the other are the adolescents as recipients of corporeal regulation. Deviation and challenge of this norm highlights and makes visible

the unruly performer as threatening. Punishment is applied to emphasize the destructive potential in being out of line.

The efforts to direct clothing options within schools are emically articulated in creating safe and productive learning environments; etically they express (at minimum) cosmetic models of student templates. The school is no different from other state institutions; it operates under strict bureaucratic guidelines with limited vision and sees of only a fraction and distortion of the actual playground diversity. The school does not see what students see. Chapters three and four elaborate on a disagreement between the official categories in operation and the organic student folk taxonomy. The preceding text addresses structural limits and convenience in “not seeing.”

Creating identically clothed pupils does not change intra ethnic differentiation performed as peer group social identities. The idea of a homogenous education population counters a heterogeneous Chicano Latino reality. Students see a world of divisions. They emphasize, make, and care about each others’ distinction because they must. Students navigate daily lives where marked identity domains regulate the types, kinds and value worth of relationships. Adolescents don’t do this to “to be mean or ugly,” but as warm ups and training for future roles. These ideas exist as scripts in the abstract but are only made “real” when acted out. To act you need a body as repository vessel of society’s ideology and thus the material unit becomes central to address education discourse. None of this conversation matters much if we ignore the body

CHAPTER 6: GETTING SCHOOLED IN WAYS OF MAKING DIFFERENCES-(Conclusion and Closing Commentary)

The text presented thus far is a review of social identity categories placed into the theoretical and methodological discourse of education as it applies to Chicana/o Latino experiences. Prior chapters have examined the school culture of labels through a combined etic and emic approach and support the conclusion that the scholastic folk taxonomy expresses deep structural patterns and mechanisms of identity transformation. The present text, carefully frames identity as situational and most visible in relationships. The education field provides the analysis context to ground identity in order to emphasize the material significance. This work supports the multiple social movements in education discourse, skeptical of the liberal vision of schools operating as centers for meritocracy, educational democracy and equality. The objective of this research was not only to highlight the urban Chicano Latino adolescent process of schooling; but place analysis and conclusions within pragmatic applied goals.

Contrary to Dewey's notion of a meritocracy-equality in human development-past critical education scholars recognize that schools take on the requisite stratification demands of the nation-state. In other words, schools are reflections of economic and national inequalities that embody the conversation and energy of sociopolitical stratification. Schools cannot be credited as matter of fact social entities but instead expressively state institutions which ultimately demanded responsibility to apply economic logic to "cultural performances" of schooling (Bourdieu; 1977). The work of Paul Willis (1977), Douglas Foley (1991), Angela Valenzuela (1999), and others

emphasize the necessity for documentation of daily scholastic minutia to reveal exactly how the process of reproduction operates. This work, supported in the ethnographic experienced, argues that models of structural inequalities must be grounded to actual individual lives in order to provide the procedural context; intervention requires exact know how of “modes of domination” in education.¹²⁵

Unfortunately, in this research field, the term “education” was as problematic as the concept itself. Education is not simply about accumulating productive information, but instead the term is limitedly defined to information attained and validated through “accredited” state structured institutions—a distinct and reflective act of differentiation. But in our highly bureaucratized class structure, acts of differentiation are internalized to such a degree that they become edited out of sight. It is through detailed ethnographic accounts that we bring this process into focus to show the personal and intimate requirements to create, maintain and reproduce society’s model of identity differentiation as a totality in a given time and place.

This dissertation details the process in which information is disseminated and assimilated through “getting schooled.” The scholastic experience is complex and meaningfully textured; some may anecdotally reference school as “the best years” but for others is recalled as the “worst.” The presented material leads the reader to abandon the romanticized notion of schools as locales where diversity, universal inquiry, and personal growth is practiced in fully equitable and multi directional dialogue. Instead, the reader

¹²⁵ “Modes of domination” is coin phrase of Peirre Bourdieu as a play on word to Marx’s “modes of production.”

must adopt a more realistic evaluation of the school as a site of critical incorporation into national, social, and economic needs. By examining how performative acts of intra-ethnic differentiation are expressions of structural requirements of inequality, the reader can formulate a more grounded view of the school. The folk taxonomy of social cliques and peer group associations become more meaningful when understood in terms of relationship-exchanges. The play ground divisions manifest complex and deep social and economic positions where value and worth is symbolically capitalized in manufactured identity domains of difference. The world of adolescent requires concrete status placements. In structural Marxist terms, education institutions functional to validate and reinforce the power structure's ideals, habits and knowledge sets (Levitas, 1977).

I ask that we extend past class structures as the sole economic containers. The case study offered here is not one where the elites' children play with the lower class employees' offspring. On the contrary, by intersecting racial constructs, Adams middle school represents degrees of structural homogeneity: "we're all brown, we're all hustling"¹²⁶ This research intends to complicate the common appropriated terms of "race" and "class" as contextually solid worldview divisions. Adams students must also learn to fully understand and internalize extracurricular divisions as natural and universal but are limited by their shared socio economic and Chicana/o Latino ethnic definition. It would seem that such constrained variability could threaten to unveil the arbitrary nature of the social categories but all stake holders (playground and school agents) teach an otherwise permeable worldview to become unquestionably permanent. As a

¹²⁶ 8th grade male student responds to question: "How would you describe Adams?"

consequence, the school experience becomes essential to the social reproduction of American national expectations. However, assimilation into the nation's ideology of singularity is only the beginning. The national narrative may guide a belief in an "American" archetype as an illusionary ideal; but counter narratives demonstrate plurality not only reflecting diversity but structural requirements of differentiation-there must be many versions of Americans.

Pushing Individuality and Value Worth

In May 2010, Arizona passed House bill 2281, enacted to declare "that public school pupils should be taught to treat and value each other as individuals and not be taught to resent or hate other races or classes of people."¹²⁷ The bill "prohibits" instruction that:

1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government.
2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people.
3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.¹²⁸

Placed alongside SB1070 (anti immigrant law) and SB1108 (removal of teachers with "heavy" accents from English classes), SB2281 (Ethnic Studies ban) is nestled as an apparent genre of ethnicity centered alarm. Arizona's state and school district actions appear drastic but in more cynical assessments, seem only to institutionalize preexisting operations. Chicana/o Latinos have historically taken the brunt of legal attention.

¹²⁷ House bill 2281 text excerpt <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/hb2281s.pdf>

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Immigration enforcement raids abstain from raiding Irish dominant communities such as the Bronx where an estimated 30,000 undocumented Irish immigrants are estimated to live while systematically targeting Latino enclaves.¹²⁹ English spoken with a Spanish accent is valued differently than one spoken with a French or Italian accent. Similarly, children systematically experience a schooling pattern where they were taught to disassemble ethnic solidarity and see one another as individuals (Spring 1997, Valenzuela 1999, Velez-Ibanez 1993). Arizona's judicial behavior presents its justification on a conversation situated in a "natural" response to a popular sentiment of frustration to pressing changes in the national political and social landscape. But the education history of racialized students such as Black, Native and Chicana/os Latinos is one of ethnic subtraction-the attack on ethnicity is not new.

The discussions on the politics of education are many. The school acts described in this work may be framed by some as child's play but should more appropriately be considered as systemic training. The ideological rules are explicit and great but potentially weakened by a flaw in that learning is experiential. Education must be acquired first hand and is metaphorically similar to the distinction between analog and digital acquisition formats. One hour of analog data cannot be compressed; it takes one hour to listen, view, input, store and transfer. Acquisition of the data as learning takes time. Information sheets, notes and marks are only brought to life in their actuation. The

¹²⁹ Gregory Rodriguez: Illegal? Better if you're Irish, LA Times, April 8, 2007
<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-op-rodriguez8apr08,0,1081193.column>

texts are not the education. To be “schooled,” children must live out and perform all the social norms one day at a time. They cannot simply read and listen but must do.

“Getting Schooled” (Intra-Ethnic Differentiation)

As adolescents “get schooled” they are taught to assimilate the explicit curriculum and experience of school culture where they also learn to see and make divisions of one another. The home community may stand as one, but while on campus they become many; a phenomenon referenced as intra-ethnic differentiation. The school world is fragmented into social peer groups arranged as classes and understood as a hierarchical arrangement of competitions between the rich and poor, cool versus the awkward and “Jocks” versus “burnouts” (Willis 1977; Milner 2004; Eckert 1987). Playground divisions commonly become acceptable miniaturized enactments of adult class systems by mirroring the surrounding community’s demographic landscape. But in Central Los Angeles, with its recent immigrant-Mexican dominant character, this model is awkward and requires caution in when appropriating reproduction models to a Chicana/o Latino context; in particular when approached with distance from material that relies on deviance, dysfunction and incompatibility. Education research in ethnicity and culture already concludes that contrasts in institution, curriculum and students can be sources of academic failure (Foley 1990; Ogbu, 1991; Valencia, 1991). I purposefully force a normative perspective to assess the possibility of attaining alternative insight. If learning to categorize and divide is part of schooling, what can learning about scholastic differentiation produce, especially when bound to heterogeneous intra-ethnic realities?

The ethnography presented details the mechanism of reproduction by fleshing out the transmission length, accumulation and permanence of capital. Unlike other systems of credit items- such as a monetary system-school capital and value worth cannot be acquired through immediate access. Social category worth is not superficial. Instead, the divisions are great, deep and layered to be ultimately embodied in the participants (Bourdieu 1977). Students attend education facilities from ages 5 (some start at age 3 with preschool) to 18. The 13 years of explicit and implicit socialization demand much more than standard based curriculum to gain resilience. Students will not remember the class content as they are too shallow and impermanent, but will vividly relive and act out the many group formations and hierarchy learned throughout their schooling (Foley 1990).

Consequently, I argue that the middle school experiences of peer groups as social identity categories are divisions corresponding to an intricate system of capital-type exchanges, manifested as relationships of value assessments. Each social group holds, manipulates and exchanges differing cultural, economic, social and/ or symbolic capital. The model I offer on capital types addresses the value and appreciation of a multitude of formats. The most visible difference being economic-but emphasizing material differences among the peer social cliques-produces an incomplete understanding of the school world. I understand that the market economy takes precedence in education discourse, most visible in Milner's (2004) work on social groupings, documented as a game of consumerism. Without disagreeing, I restate that an exclusive economic perspective is incomplete. Resources are various and interchangeable. Value exists in

the resource details and relationships. Students display a highly complex economic market where resources are regulated and monitored to assure a stable and continuous value system.

The single class-bracket of the students' home network makes the adolescents relatively equal outside. However, there is an aspect of conversion once inside the school where resources are not just exchanged and managed via the playground society but also institutionally. The teachers, curriculum and overall education experiences of magnet students represent the inverse experience from that of recent immigrant students. The "magnets" stand as "Americanized" and "white washed" get more resources than "Chuntaros," also known as "Mexican-Mexicans" or "wetbacks." Students attend a divided world of pressures, stress and rewards; not because school environments are unique but because they are so normal. The sociopolitical segmented national arrangement is repeated within school walls.

The built society requires a powerful ideology for logic and order. The social cliques are rationalized as essential and justified by the unquestioned nature of divisions, though obviously constructive. Consequently, the social game of group membership is achieved. Magnet students enter this institutional domain through an application process. LAUSD offers parents an opportunity to apply to "magnet" schools for their elementary, middle and high school attendance. Selection is based on a variety of criteria ranging from academic performance, "gifted" status to the local school's performance.¹³⁰ Ascription of "magnets" is one of the few select examples of parental cultural capital

¹³⁰ The Magnet application is called CHOICES. <http://echoices.lausd.net/faq.aspx>

transferring onto the students. Parents who apply for the Adams 'magnet program are assured an opportunity for a distinctly "better" experience for their children.

Unfortunately most parents are unaware that there is program available for all students where applications are not required. This research demonstrates a school program of intra ethnic differential imbedded in peer group social divisions. Chicana/o Latino urban youth learn to make distinctions that prepare them for adult arrangements of differential value returns. Adults not only participate in complex relations of divisions of labor but assess and treat one another in guidance of value criteria.

Applied Outcomes

The research presented here is at the core an address of identity. The main unit of study is a theoretical and methodological undertaking to add another conversation to the multilayered politics involved in schooling Chicana/o Latino Urban Youth. The foci on identity constructs become practical "sense making" tools applied onto the web of social, political, national and economic issues manifested in formal education. This research is initiated with advocacy and invested participation as the final expression of this project. As such, I believe that social research as a collective engagement, gains meaning when direct theoretical conclusions materialize in applied work.

The cliché phrase "education is power" becomes a mantra in the context of schooling; information access becomes a disputed commodity. Teachers, students and parents alike all vie for opportunities to apply what they know. Students struggle daily using subtle not so subtle tactics in attempts to be heard. Parents may have more opportunities to participate but the process of formal education operates within structural

arrangements that divide parents from the schooling of their children. Adults with formal credentials become validated in the information they can offer where parents without “credentials” are discredited. Parents advocate for their respective children’s educational welfare but always in disparate terms-individual versus institution. For immigrant parents, the separation is exacerbated by language, class, citizenship and, residency which are in turn condensed and attached onto ethnicity. Wealthier “American” parents break through the divide through compatibility and comfort. Parent involvement must be reframed. All parents care about the education their children, but all are not heard equally.

Early in the research, it became apparent that parents were instrumental to education, yet relatively absent within the school. Their visible representation in the form of a dozen parent volunteers-one receiving payroll compensation-mask the limited participation of home guardians. The foreignness of parent involvement became more obvious during the scheduled “parent nights” and special programs where fathers, mothers, uncles and aunts wandered halls with hesitation, awkward caution and distant engagements with teachers. Administrators spoke with great enthusiasm of their “parent helpers” and parent friendly atmosphere while demonstrating obvious limits and even reproach.

Within the first week of entry into the school site I asked Mr. S, the principal, permission to speak at the following scheduled parent meeting. Mr. S responded with “Why? That’s not necessary. You can handout Parent permission forms directly through

the classes you will be sitting into.” I replied, “I think it will help if I introduce myself in person.” With that, I was placed in the following Tuesday’s parent meeting schedule.

The following week I attended my first parent meeting, held in the cafeteria benches and moderated by the unofficial parent leader, Ms B. In attendance were approximately 30 parents; one African American mother and of the remaining Chicana/o Latino parents, three were fathers, the rest mothers and aunts. The principal also attended, the agenda read he would speak on the change to the school calendar, “moving to traditional.” I was scheduled last, “UCR student research.” Mr. S introduced me to the group:

“We have a young man from the University of California in Riverside, and he is going to talk about his research in our school. There are great things happening in Adams and he will be studying us. But before, I would like to point out that he is a former patriot. He’s one of us. When did you attend? See this is the kind of student we can put out. He is working on his doctorate. Your kids can be like him someday.”

I was brief in my introduction, explained the research and asked for their cooperation. The parents were not only very polite but showed great interest in the project. Almost everyone accepted to participate and I was asked to return in order to “explain myself better.” The second visit turned to a third, then a fourth to eventually transform into biweekly “workshops.” Out of serendipity, the applied placement of this work developed. Over a two-year period and coffee doughnuts as well as home cooked meals, we bridged information gaps between parents and their children’s life experiences. The *platicas* (talks) demonstrated tremendous applied immediacy. Tuesday’s topic on “Players versus Cholos” was discussed at home. A student angrily approached me after he was asked by his father - “*Mijo tu a cual grupo perteneces?* (Son, what group do you belong to?). That same week, a previously unacquainted “Cholo” criticized my activity:

“You’re that guy from the university right? Mister! You’re messing up my game. I’m getting heat at home for everything. My *jefes* [parents] want to know everything. All of a sudden it’s like, what group do you belong to? Why are you wearing that? Do you do this? Do you do that?”¹³¹

The workshops fostered parent involvement through greater understanding of the complexity and consequence in the multiple identity domains in school. On one occasion a parent asked, “What does all this mean? I get that there are a lot of groups. It’s always been that way. I remember that from back on my day.”¹³² I explained that each clique group experienced a distinct version of schooling and understanding the intricate details of the respective exchanges translated to greater opportunity for intervention and change. “Un-naturalizing” the game of divisions was the beginning in order to move research past simply critiquing. Children’s lives are documented and ethnographically presented as purposefully political. We deconstruct to create culture visions that are more equitable and accepting of diversity.

¹³¹ Older looking, 8th grade (repeating) male student later peer identified as Cholo.

¹³² Female African American parent, question the value of explaining school social cliques.

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